THE LIFE OF A FOXHOUND

BY

JOHN MILLS

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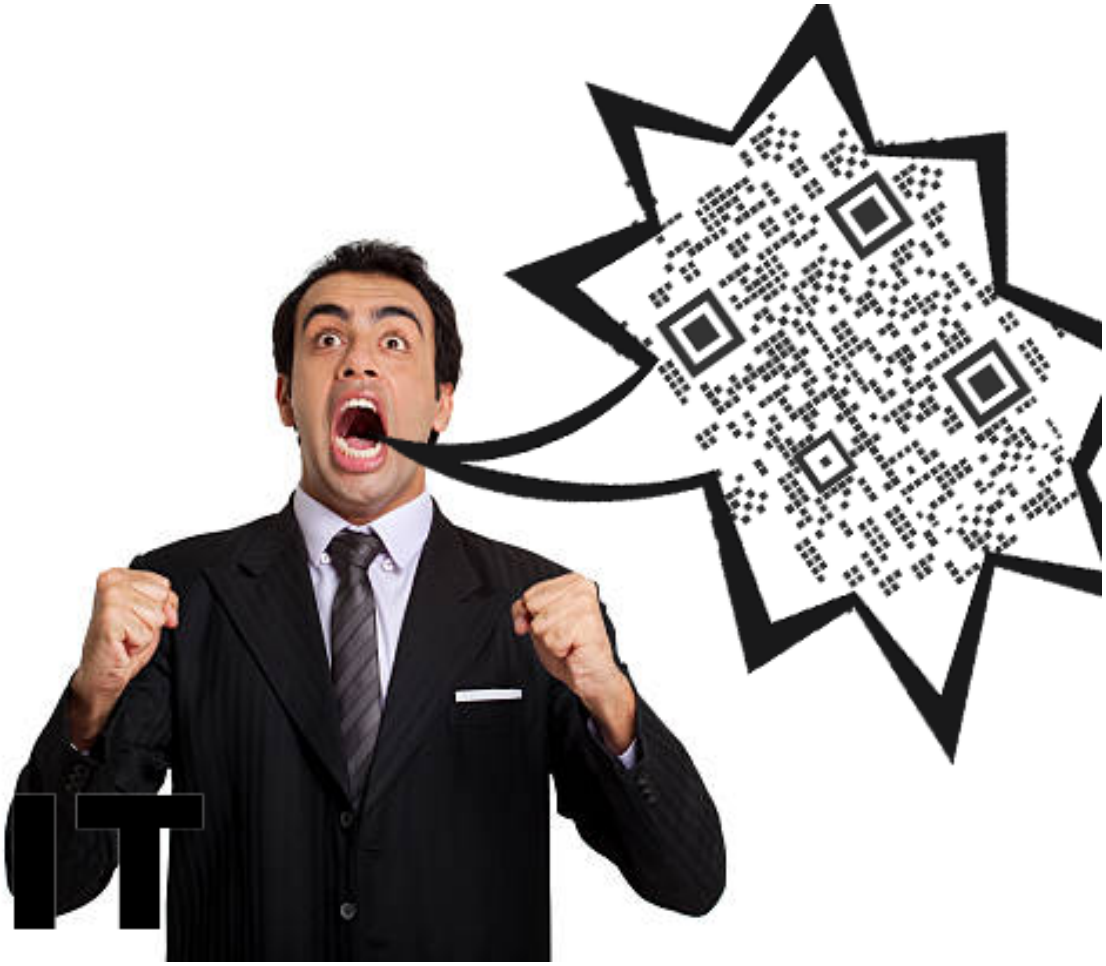

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THE LIFE OF A FOXHOUND.

THE MEET.

THE LIFE OF A FOXHOUND.

BY

JOHN MILLS,

AUTHOR OF "THE OLD ENGLISH GENTLEMAN," "THE LIFE OF A RACEHORSE," ETC.

THE FIFTH EDITION,

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY

JOHN LEECH.

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TO

HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS

THE PRINCE OF WALES

K.G., G.M.M.G., G.M.B.E., M.C., &c.

SIR,

That fox-hunting is an ancient and honourable pastime all will agree: ancient in that the fox was held to be a beast of venery by our Anglo-Saxon ancestors, honourable because it is a sport that has ever been associated with those excellent qualities of manhood which are the prerogative of our race. That it is a royal pastime is equally plain: for hunting has been regarded, in all ages, as the chief sport of Kings and Princes. Indeed it is due principally to the encouragement and protection accorded to it by the Royal House of England that the noble sport of fox-hunting is in so flourishing a condition to-day. And so it is both fitting and proper, Sir, that this, the fifth edition of a notable contribution to our sporting literature, should be dedicated to you who uphold so admirably the traditions of British sport.

Your Royal Highness's
humble, obedient servant,
THE EDITOR.

PREFACE.

TRIMBUSH told his story—the story of his life—long ago, and a generation of sportsmen having, probably, been succeeded by another since then, the autobiography of that old and sagacious hound is now presented to the notice of those who may have been denied the opportunity of profiting either by his sage advice or experience.

It will be conceded that, whatever egotism taints his arguments, Trimbush was "a shrewd philosopher, having a why for every wherefore." He spoke of men and foxes as he found them; and if occasionally somewhat too severe upon the commissions and omissions of the former, he was equally ready, at all times, to show his teeth to the latter.

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THE

LIFE OF A FOXHOUND.

CHAPTER I.

I HAD the excellent fortune, begins Ringwood's memoir, to be put at walk at a farm-house, where I enjoyed the treatment observed to all the animals under the care and protection of the farmer and his wife—that of universal kindness. Sweet milk, meal, and broth were my provisions; and I never was without a clean, dry, and warm bed. Basking in the sun, playing with the shepherd's dog, following the men at work, and in a complete state of perfect freedom, my early puppyhood passed. I mention these

apparently trifling circumstances, because so much depends, as will be shown hereafter, upon the way in which we are brought up. I was one of a litter of five, consisting of three brothers and two sisters, and each had been placed at a separate walk; so that, until we were sent to the kennel to be drafted, we had not seen each other since the day of separation.

Sorry as I was to leave my kind benefactors, still I felt no small degree of pride as, on a bright, sunny, spring morning, I was led into a court of the kennel, and met with greater admiration from the huntsmen and whips than any other of the young entry therein assembled, consisting of eleven couples and a half.

"Upon my word," said the huntsman, looking at me carefully from head to stern, "I don't think that I ever saw such a beauty in my life. Such deep quarters, straight legs, round feet, and broad back are not to be met with every day, mind ye."

"Look at them shoulders and elbows too," rejoined the first whip.

"And what a muzzle!" returned the second.

"Bless'd if he ain't perfect symmetry!" echoed the feeder, after a long and silent gaze.

"I *do* think he is," added the huntsman, emphatically. "Or if he isn't, *I* can't see a bad point in him."

"That shows what the walk will do," said the feeder, an old grey-headed man, pointing to four of our company. "Nobody would believe those were of the same litter, didn't they know it."

But for this I should not have recognised my brothers and sisters, who certainly bore a very different appearance from that given of me by the huntsman. As we appeared strangers to each other, I at once made myself known, and inquired after their health and treatment since we last met.

"Oh," replied one of my brothers, snappishly, "I was sent to the village ale-house, where I had to pick up my own living, and got more kicks than good will. I was always in somebody's way, try as I did to keep out of it; and the consequence is, I can't run a mile without feeling as if my back's broken. We don't always die on the day we are killed," continued he.

"As for me," said my other fraternal

relative—a mangy, out-of-the-elbow, shy-looking, down-cast hound—" I was tied up from one month's end to another at a butcher's shop, with nothing to eat but the offal from the slaughter-house. I never, scarcely, was let loose, except to fight with one of the bull-dogs or terriers chained in the yard with me; but as I was always over-matched when I fought, and got well thrashed when I refused, the end was the same in either case. The best part of a hound," continued he, " as the best part of a horse, goes in at the mouth; and as none, since I was a sucker, has gone into mine, I suppose I must consider myself no better than I should be; and I fear," concluded he, with a sorrowful expression, " not so good."

" Let me hope that my sisters were more fortunate," said I.

" We were together in the same village," replied one, " although at different homes. I was at the saddler's and my sister at the miller's, and both shared the common hardships of being continually worried by a set of idle boys. Stoned, hallooed at, kettles tied to our tails, and all kinds of tricks were played upon us. Whenever anything eatable was

missed or stolen, it was invariably laid to our charge; so that we could not even put our heads into a doorway without having a stick or a broom flung at us. Day after day this was our treatment, and although we did not suffer from a scarcity of food, yet from being obliged to shift for ourselves in getting beds where we could find them, sometimes cold, sometimes wet, and no system being observed in either our meals or lodgings, we were seldom without lameness or ill-health of one kind or other."

My sister was about giving the further details of their grievances, when the second whip, a fine, young, athletic man, interrupted her narration by observing that "he would draft all the litter but me."

"No, no," returned the feeder, shaking his head. "You'll not find the Squire do that: we must keep 'em for their blood."

"Come," added the huntsman, turning upon his heel, "they're all in now, and to-morrow will show what are to be entered. We've no voice in the matter."

"And don't want to have," rejoined the feeder, "with such a master as the Squire is."

Soon after my entry I was taken under the

protection of an old hound called Trimbush, and the favourite one in the pack. He had been hunted six seasons, and, as may be supposed, was awake to every wrinkle.

"Hounds, like men," said he, one day, as we stretched ourselves together in the shade of a large chestnut-tree overhanging the court, "should first learn their duties, and then perform them. Now, young-un, I've taken a fancy to you," continued he, giving me a playful flip with the tip of his stern; "and if you follow my advice you will save yourself many a stinging cut from our Whip's double-thong. He hits terribly hard, I assure ye."

"Does he?" replied I, believing, in my innocence, that such a good-tempered, laughing fellow would scarcely brush a fly from our hackles.

"So you'll say," continued my friend, "when you've tasted it."

"But I mean to avoid flogging," I rejoined, "by obeying orders."

"Pooh, pooh," returned Trimbush, testily. "Intentions are good enough; but a fig for orders when the blood's up! I don't always obey them myself, old as I am. However, as you haven't yet viewed a fox, it's no use my

mentioning anything about the field. We shall begin cub-hunting in a few weeks, and then you will get a little insight as to what you are to do there. In the meantime I'll cut some notches in your memory regarding kennel discipline, and relate a few peculiarities concerning your companions."

"Thank you," said I to the friendly offer.

"In the first place I should tell you," began Trimbush, "that the best step to take at the outset is to endeavour to become a favourite with those in authority over you. This is easily acquired, by doing that which you are told cheerfully, and without the trouble of compulsion being exercised. For it's one thing to disobey an order when hunting, and quite another in the kennel. We all love our huntsman, Will Sykes; but he is very strict, and never allows a fault to pass without a rate or the thong being applied. When called, walk up to him with your ears thrown back smilingly, and carry your stern high and proudly. Will can't bear a hound to look like a sneak. Don't be quarrelsome at feeding time, or indeed at any other; for although family differences will occasionally arise over the meal and broth, never be among the first to

cause them. I am far from meaning by this that you are not to maintain your rights; on the contrary, you, like everything that lives, not only possess them, but are bound, in self-defence, to support them. There is as much danger, if not more, in always giving way to the domineering of tyrants as in acting the tyrant yourself; although," continued Trimbush, with a growl at the reminiscence, "the results proved the same here not more than three seasons since."

"How was that?" inquired I.

"Why," replied he, "in all packs there is a master hound, who lords it over the rest just as he pleases. Now it frequently happens that this master becomes a regular bully, and so worries and torments his companions, that there is no living in comfort with him. We had a governor of this kind three years ago, and what do you think we did?"

"Can't say," rejoined I.

"Killed and ate him," returned Trimbush, with no more concern than if speaking of the death of a rabbit.

"Killed and ate him!" repeated I, horrified.

"Ay," rejoined he, "marrow, bones, and

all, with the exception of his head." *

"Dog eat dog!" I exclaimed, scarcely believing the statement to be true.

"It's not an every-day occurrence," coolly replied Trimbush; "but what I've told ye is by no means a solitary instance, as you shall learn. There was a shy, broken-spirited puppy entered the same season with me, and whenever any of us began a bit of fun with him, he'd shriek and howl 'pen-an-ink' just as if he was being murdered. This, of course, led every one to take advantage, and the poor devil never had any peace of mind or body. One day, however, when a few of us had pinned him in a corner of the court, and were baiting him for sport, who should step in but Ned Adams, the second whip. How he paid us off, to be sure! Not one escaped but with every bone in his body aching fit to split."

"But it served all of you right," interrupted I.

"Perhaps it did," rejoined Trimbush; "but we thought otherwise, and no sooner had Ned turned his back than we commenced

* This took place some years since in Mr. Conyer's kennel, at Copthall, Essex.

making a retaliation upon the cur who had caused us such a drubbing. We had scarcely begun, however, when Ned again made his unwelcome appearance, and flogged us until every stroke from his double-thong seemed to soak right through our bodies. Before the cock gave notice of the coming day,'' continued Trimbush, significantly, '' Tricksy—for that was the name of the hound—was disposed of so as to leave no trace behind.''

'' Eaten ! '' I ejaculated.

'' We didn't leave,'' replied my friend deliberately, and dropping his words like peas from his jaws, '' even his *head*.''

'' But why was this done ? '' inquired I.

'' The simplicity of infancy is truly refreshing ! '' observed Trimbush. '' There's an adage, that a dead dog *may* tell how he was killed,'' continued he; '' but an *eaten* one never can. Do you comprehend ? ''

'' Perfectly,'' responded I.

'' From what I have said,'' he resumed, '' you must now be aware of the policy of neither being overbearing to your fellows, nor too tame or submissive to them. I am now master here, and this is the rule I both teach and observe.''

"And a very good one too," I remarked; "but don't let me interrupt you. Pray proceed."

"You would find out in time," resumed Trimbush, "but may as well profit by my experience, and learn it at once, that most men who go with us to the covert-side know little about hunting and less about hounds. So long as their patience is not cramped with drawing blanks, and we go the pace with heads up and sterns down, they are satisfied, and take little further interest in us. Not one in fifty can tell even what the points of a hound are; and as for understanding anything about our habits and dispositions, they think that we are as much alike as cherries upon the same stalk. So far, however, from that being the case, we differ from each other in every respect as much as man to man engaged in the same pursuit, and frequently inherit the peculiarities of our fathers and mothers, as they do. You see that black-and-tan hound basking in the sun?"

"Yes."

"That's Valentine. Now, his father, who was killed from a kick three years ago, always trotted to and from kennel just under

the huntsman's off stirrup, and Valentine does precisely the same. There's Graceful, a bitch in the next court—she invariably is the first home and the last to covert, and her mother did the like before her."

"That appears to be innate laziness," I observed.

"No," replied Trimbush. "So far from that being the case, there never were better working hounds on earth."

"Then how do you account for it?" inquired I.

"There are many things," returned Trimbush, with the air of a philosopher, "as clear to our vision as the sunshine at noon, and yet their causes are hid in impenetrable darkness. I cannot," continued he, "tell why Graceful and Valentine should inherit the eccentricities of their parents, but only see that they do so."

"Are these the only two instances coming under your observation?" I asked.

"By no means," replied my companion. "I could recite a dozen others of a similar nature, but I fear they might prove wearisome. You see that badger-pied hound amusing himself by snapping at the flies

buzzing about him? Well, he is a nephew of mine, and makes it a rule, as his father did, to carry home whatever part of the varmint that falls to his share, and never eats it, unless there is a great chance of its being dragged away from him, till he gets to the kennel door."

"Perhaps he wishes to show everybody on the road that he had a hand in the breaking up," said I.

"I think vanity has something to do with it," replied my friend; "but if so, he inherits the pride from his sire, just as those peculiarities I have named are inborn in others."

"I suppose, if these habits descend from parent to child," I observed, "that vices are also inheritable."

"Decidedly," replied Trimbush, beginning to evince symptoms of drowsiness. "Rioting, skirting, babbling, and all such-like faults, are inheritable, and as much so as the defective points in symmetry."

"It appears to me somewhat harsh, then," rejoined I, "to punish us for them."

"That's a matter," added Trimbush, "I must leave to be decided between you and Ned

Adams;'' and then turning upon his side he closed his eyes, and a deep, low snore quickly proclaimed him to be in the land of shadowy dreams.

I found kennel life at first very tedious, and soon began to pine for the farm-house, liberty, and a romp with the shaggy old shepherd's dog. I became so home-sick at length, that had the opportunity offered, I should have run away; but when taken for exercise, I was always coupled with a companion, and no chance given of an escape from my thraldom. Notwithstanding the kindness of the feeder, in offering me food twice, and occasionally even three times a day, I got thinner and thinner, and instead of the sleek and bright coat which I had upon leaving my walk, my hackles now began to stare and to look little less rough than a badger's skin. Trimbush, too, essayed to relieve me from my load of misery, and recounted many a tale of interest to wean me from gloomy reflections; but it was all to no purpose. I could not forget the pleasures of home.

" He'll be right enough in a day or two,'' said the huntsman to an expression of regret from the feeder at my altered appearance.

"Let him go cub-hunting once, and he will not sulk another hour."

"I believe ye," rejoined the feeder. "There's too good blood in him for that, after he has winded a fox."

"Well, then," added the huntsman, "to-morrow at daylight we draw Wiverton Gorse; and if it does not hold a litter, it will be the first time since my servitude—a matter of twenty-five years and more."

CHAPTER II.

"But, look! the morn, in russet mantle clad,
Walks o'er the dew of yon high eastern hill."

The dew fell, dropping from leaf to leaf, and hung on the greensward in an endless succession of glistening gems. The mist floated on a light breeze, scarcely strong enough to waft the wet spider's film meshed on sprig, and bough, and hawthorn spray. Mushrooms marked the rings where the elves of the night had held their orgies, and the fairy's light—the glowworm's lamp—still shone faintly on the moss-bank. Like a bride, veiled but not hidden, the young, gay morning broke, with a smile, the slumbering hours. Drooping flowers raised their petals, and

folded blossoms opened to her kiss. Wild and happy birds heralded her coming, and all things of the day welcomed her.

At daybreak we were on our road to Wiverton Gorse, accompanied by Will Sykes, the huntsman, Tom Holt and Ned Adams, the assistant whippers-in. I could not suppress the delight I felt in going to cover; and, instead of the homesick and sullen feeling which I had had for a length of time, I was ready to jump out of my skin with spirits.

"Pray, keep quiet!" said Trimbush, in a reproving tone, as I galloped to his side, and laid hold of one of his ears, by way of an invitation to a romp. "Pray, keep quiet!" repeated he; "you can't be too steady in going to cover. Nurse your strength," he continued, "until it's wanted."

"I could race for thirty miles this morning, without a check!" replied I, boastfully.

"Pooh, pooh!" rejoined Trimbush; "that's the way with you young-uns—all brag and self-conceit; and when it comes to hard running, where are ye in a brace of shakes? Somewhat in this form," continued he, hanging down his head, with outstretched tongue and drooping stern.

I laughed heartily at Trimbush's acting a fagged and beaten hound; and, although I had not seen one at the time, I subsequently learned that it was a very faithful representation.

"One would think, from that puppy's gambolsome larking," observed the huntsman, pointing to me, "that he knows what he's going about."

"Perhaps he do," sagely returned Tom Holt.

"How the devil should he?" rejoined Will Sykes. "Isn't this his first day's cub-hunting?"

"Yes," added the first whip. "But don't you think them dumb animals have a language of their own? I'm blest if they don't almost talk to us sometimes."

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Will Sykes. "You're a pretty kind of a Christian, Tom. I suppose, by-an'-bye, you'll say they sing hymns."

"I don't see why they shouldn't," replied the imperturbable Tom Holt. "At least," continued he, "if they don't, they're a sight more sensible than many of those that do."

"Come, come," said the huntsman, in a

correcting tone; "try back, Tom. We shall have stones fall from the clouds presently, if you go on in that way."

"It wouldn't surprise me if they did," replied the whipper-in, as cool as a cucumber. "When so many folk, both gentle an' simple, are building castles in the air, it's nothing but reasonable that some o' the stones should tumble."

"Ca-a-pital!" added Will Sykes admiringly. "I like a sharp and ready tongue. But you don't really mean to say, Tom, that you think hounds have a way of speaking to one another?"

"Yes, I do," replied the whipper-in; "and have no doubt of the fact. They have the sense," continued he, "to understand what we say *to* them, and a great deal, in my opinion, of what we say *of* them; and it's quite as natural, if not more so, that they should have a language of their own, as it is for them to comprehend a foreign one."

"Your notions are queer ones, Tom," observed the huntsman. "And you'd have me believe, I suppose, that Ringwood there has been *told* what he's going to do?"

"Nothing more likely," replied Tom Holt.

We were now on the verge of Wiverton Gorse—an extensive brake of some forty acres of high but not thick furze, except in patches where it had been lately cut.

"Don't let a hound get away," said the huntsman. "We'll rattle the covers well; but be sure and hold the hounds in."

At this moment Bluecap and Dauntless made an attempt to sneak away; and, before getting a rate from Ned Adams, found his double thong cracking round their loins.

"That's for not waiting orders," observed Trimbush.

"Cover-hoik! cover-hoik!" hallooed the huntsman; "Elooin-hoik!" and into the brake we crashed like a flash of lightning.

"That's the dash of the old blood!" said the huntsman, as I rushed through the gorse with the ambitious eagerness to find. "I'd bet a season's capping," continued he, "that he takes as kindly to work as a baby does to sucking."

"You'd better keep by me," observed Trimbush, "and learn a little of your business, instead of tearing your eyes out in that blundering, stupid manner. One would think, if you were not a greenhorn of a

puppy, that a dying fox stood before ye, instead of not having so much as found one."

But I was in no humour to be dictated to; and in spite of lacerating the corners of my eyes, ears and stern, I flew right and left through the furze, in the hope of being the first to challenge. In pressing through a thick patch, I scented that which I instantly concluded must be a fox; and, immediately afterwards catching a glimpse of something spring across a ride, I threw up my head, and made the cover echo as I dashed along the line. I was much surprised, however, that none of the old hounds joined me, and that, with the exception of three or four of the same age as myself, who merely gave tongue because I did, no response or cheer was given to my efforts.

In a few seconds we found ourselves through the brake at the farthest corner up wind, and in close proximity to the dreaded presence of Ned Adams.

"War hare, puppy!" hallooed he, riding at me, and cracking his heavy whip. "War hare! war hare! Hark back! hark back!"

Learning that I had committed an error, I was not slow to obey the caution, by getting

out of the reach of the thong; although, as I afterwards discovered, there was no fear of being punished for a fault until it had been repeated. Scarcely had I again turned into the brake, when my friend Trimbush gave a deep-toned note, announcing that a fox was afoot.

"Hoik to Trimbush!" hallooed the huntsman—"Hoik to Trimbush!" and, as a bunch of hounds took up the cry, he added, "Hoik together, hoik!"

Galloping on the line where three or four couple of the knowing ones were feathering their sterns and ringing their music, I for the first time winded a fox. Anxious to distinguish myself, I at once began making more din about it than all the old hounds put together.

"Don't jingle your tongue as if you were currant-jelly hunting," said Trimbush, contemptuously, as I joined his side. "A workman," continued he, "never wastes his breath with too much whistling."

Feeling that there was truth in his chiding, I changed my tone, and gave tongue only when my friend did.

"That's right," remarked Trimbush,

flattered at my observing his dictate: "now you sound like business."

"Have at him!" hallooed Will Sykes. "Yoo-oo-it, hoik!"

Hounds were now hunting in every direction of the cover; and it was evident that several foxes were before them.

"The vixen and the whole litter are a-foot!" I overheard the first whip say.

"Did you view her?" inquired Will Sykes.

"Yes!" was the reply; "and she's gone away."

"Then there's a dog-fox behind," rejoined the huntsman.

"I thought so," quietly observed Trimbush, stooping his muzzle to the ground, and drawing, with infinite gratification to his olfactory nerves. "I thought so," repeated he: "a vixen, except she's barren, never carries such a scent as that."

"You know the difference, then?" returned I.

"Ay," rejoined Trimbush; "as well as if I had helped to break her up. And so will you in a couple of seasons."

"But how?" asked I.

"By experience," replied my companion;

" and from the natural aversion most animals have to destroy anything with or about to have young. But come," he continued, " this is no time for talking, although we shall be stopped from getting away if they can get to our heads in time. However, keep close to me, and I'll try to get a bat by ourselves in spite of 'em."

" Who-whoop," hallooed the huntsman.

" They've chopped a cub," said Trimbush. " Now's our time, if Ned Adams doesn't head him back."

A succession of loud cracks from a whip followed; but no halloo was given.

" He's gone away," remarked Trimbush, with glee; " and we'll be on good terms with him. Stick to me."

Keeping close to my companion's stern, I ran stride and stride with him through the brake until we came to a corner of the cover where the fox we were hunting broke away.

" Now then," said Trimbush cheerily; " up with your head and down with your stern. Come along, the scent's a burning one."

The instant that Trimbush was free of the cover, he laid himself upon the line, and raced like a greyhound; I following in his wake.

Hearing the heavy stride of a horse in our rear, I turned my head to see who was following.

"Take no notice," said the old hound: "If Ned gets to our heads—and he'll prick blood for it, I'll be sworn—the sport's all over with us."

"What the deuce does he want to stop us for?" inquired I.

"Pooh," rejoined Trimbush. "Rattle on."

The second whip came spurring on with the evident desire of reaching us; but the faster he came, the faster we flew.

"Ha, ha!" laughed Trimbush; "we'll give ye a sob for it."

Along two open grass fields we led the whipper-in; and then, for more than a mile, up a long, narrow lane, flanked by two high banks.

"I haven't carried a bit of scent since we left the turf," observed I.

"Nor I either," replied my companion.

"Then what's the use of flashing on in this way?" I asked.

"You've no cunning in ye yet," replied Trimbush, "or you wouldn't ask such a simple question. However, so much the better.

Craft in the young is unwholesome; while, if the old don't possess some, they have lived too long unprofitably. Now, we have no time to stop, and if we had we could do nothing with the scent on this hard, dry road: but having found our fox *up* wind, and as he turned *down* upon breaking cover, I know that he will *not* turn again. We have, therefore, but to make our own cast good one way; and then, in the event of not being able to hit it off, to try the other to be certain of getting on the line—unless, indeed, he should chance to head short back, which not one fox out of a hundred will do, unless it is to die."

"But we shall have no chance of making a cast," said I, "with Ned at our sterns."

"I know the point he's making for," returned my friend; "and if we once get clear of this everlasting lane on to the scrubs, I'll forgive Ned if he stops us this time. I *do* like," continued he, "a run o' this kind. There's a spice about anything stolen."

Upon coming to a sudden turn in the road, Trimbush all but stood still at seeing a flock of sheep in our way; who, upon our nearing them, began scampering before us, and became wedged together like one solid body.

"The devil!" exclaimed my companion, making an ineffectual effort to reach the edge of the steep bank, and reeling almost over in the attempt. "No matter," continued he, as springing upon his feet, and rushing forwards, he galloped along the backs of the scared flock; and, following his example, we cleared the impediment, and found ourselves on the right side of a great obstacle to our pursuer, Ned Adams.

"Now we're all right," said Trimbush, exultingly; "and we shall have it to ourselves in spite of 'em."

The long twisting and twining lane led on to an open heath or sheep-walk, covered here and there with patches of broom, furze, and dwarf blackberry bushes.

"We'll first try down wind to the right," said Trimbush; "for although Will Sykes very often takes us just the other way, so as to make sure the varmint hasn't given us the artful dodge by slipping back on his foil, it's a bad cast except with a beaten fox, and generally widens the distance between us and him. Always," continued the old hound, stooping his muzzle to the ground as he trotted cautiously along, "try the way first

you think he's gone; and, having made that good, it's quite time enough to take the other."

On coming to some sloping, moist ground, Trimbush stopped, and, feathering for a moment, threw up his head and made the air ring with melody as he hit off the scent again.

"We are all right," said he, exultingly. "We'll either kill or burst him to earth."

I could now wind the varmint with my head stretched in the air; and it was as easy hunting as a bagman sprinkled with aniseed.

"There's nothing like break-o'-day hunting," observed my companion: "the ground is cool and unstained; and there are no people about. Those terrible enemies to our sport, shepherd's dogs, too, are not often in the way; and the hundred-and-one difficulties to be picked through at noon removed."

"But we are not thrown off generally at this hour, are we?" inquired I.

"Never," replied my friend, "except at this season. In times gone by," continued he, "as I have heard tell, the meet used to be before cock-crow; and often hounds would be waiting at the cover-side for daylight. But fox-hunting, like most other things, has

undergone a great change; and instead of the old slow-and-sure system of occupying minutes to find and hours to kill, we are now, taking the season through, hours finding, and minutes killing.''

"Which afforded most sport, do you think?" inquired I.

"It's difficult to say," returned Trimbush. "Unless we go the pace, men now consider that there is no sport whatever; but some years since, the merits of a good hunting run had nothing to do with the time in which it was done, like a horse-race. With a cold scent, stained ground, and an unruly field—heading the fox, riding over us, and hallooing at everything from a cow's tail to a jackdaw—we frequently pick through, and even hold it on with extraordinary keenness; but seldom, indeed, do we get any credit for our pains. If, however, the scent is breast high—as it is this morning, or I couldn't talk to you—and we fly along without a check, for fifteen or twenty minutes, with blood for the finish, then there is no end to the praise, and we receive nothing but commendation and renown. Not that *I* am an advocate for slow hunting:—for the enjoyment of sport, there

must be a dash, spirit, and fire; and in creeping along at snail's speed there can be neither one nor the other. But what I wish our admirers and critics to understand is, that a fast run by no means shows our qualities, but a slow one may do so; and often that both our praise and our censure are equally unmerited."

"Still," said I, beginning to pant for wind as we rattled up a steep hill, with the scent improving, if possible, at every stride, "as the old exploded system wanted that dash and spirit which, you say, are indispensable for first-rate sport, there can be no doubt of the present one being the most desirable."

"On the whole I think so," rejoined my companion; "but that may be," he continued, "from not being practically acquainted with any other. At the same time, 'honour to those to whom honour is due;' and my belief is that our ancestors, the line hunters, *hunted* their fox as well, if not better, than we who now *race* him down."

"Your judgment's an impartial one," returned I.

"Good or bad, better or worse," resumed Trimbush, "it's no use arguing about the

matter: 'tis the pace now that's wanted, and will be had. If we can't hunt, we must race; and the moment we're at fault you'll hear a dozen tongues holloa:—'Lift 'em hard, Will. That's your time o' day. Chink-wink 'em along!' "

"There's no time given, then?" said I.

"Time!" repeated Trimbush with a sneer. "I'll just give ye an instance of what may be deemed a fair sample of the patience of sportsmen of the age we live in. One day last season we had been running a merry bat, for about twenty minutes, as hard as we could split, and leading the field over enough yawners to satisfy the greatest glutton or steeple-chase rider that ever crammed at a rasper. The fox was dying, and, heading short on his foil up wind, brought us to a momentary check. 'Hold hard, gentlemen!' hallooed Will Sykes; 'pray hold hard!' 'Consume me!' exclaimed one who had been jamming his horse close to our sterns; 'what sport one might have, if it wasn't for these d——d hounds!' "

"A pretty kind of a foxhunter, truly!" I remarked.

"A faithful description of the majority, I

can assure ye," replied my companion. "But I must not lose any more breath in talking to you," continued he; "I may feel the want of it."

I had already done so, but was too proud to let the symptoms be visible in any flagging on my part. Desirous as I was, however, to maintain the pace we had been going for some minutes, and over part of an enclosed country with strong fences, I began to feel my strength failing, and the absurdity of my boast of endurance becoming manifested. I now, in spite of every exertion, dropped in the rear; and although Trimbush cheered me to hold on, I could not but think there was a chuckle of triumph in his often-repeated query, "Why don't you come along? Recollect what you said about thirty miles without a check." And then, as if to mock me, the old hound increased his speed, and, upon reaching a wide and level common, ran completely out of view, leaving me alone in my glory.

For a short time I endeavoured to struggle forwards, but quickly losing the line, and becoming bewildered and giddy from fatigue, I soon staggered to a stand-still. Ignorant of

my way home, and not knowing what to do better, I gave tongue for assistance, and was heartily glad to have my cry responded to by the loud barking of a shepherd's dog, whom I perceived with his master, in a valley at the foot of the hill on which I stood. In a few seconds he came trotting up to me, and mutual delight was experienced in finding that we were familiar acquaintances, and had had many a game of fun together when I was at walk at the home of my puppyhood, the hospitable farm-house.

"What, Ringwood, lad!" exclaimed the shepherd upon approaching me, and patting my sides, "is it you? Zounds, but it is!" continued he. "I'd know thee anywhere, skeleton though ye be."

For that night I was housed in my old home, and the following day again conducted to the kennel.

"I wouldn't have lost him for the whole entry," said Will Sykes, receiving me with a warm welcome. "I can't think," continued he, turning to the second whip, who, I thought, regarded me with rather a savage expression, "how you let 'em get away."

"I've told ye twenty times already,"

replied Ned Adams, in a tone and manner portraying his humour, "that the devil himself couldn't get to their heads. I did my best, and, like many o' my betters, was beaten."

"Well, well!" rejoined the huntsman with glee, "it's the first time that I ever heard of a whipper-in not being able to stop a puppy, cub-hunting. Ha, ha, ha."

"It was Trimbush, and not him," returned the irate Ned.

"Oh!" added Will Sykes, "It was Trimbush, eh? It wasn't worth while then, I suppose, to get to the head of one without the other, and yet, if I am told rightly, it would have been a difficult job to have separated them."

The second whip was evidently chafed at this bantering, and turned away with a flushed cheek, and a tongue muttering anything but his prayers.

Upon entering the kennel again, all my companions came round me, and each, in turn, licked my torn ears and eyes, and were as kind and friendly as if I had been a brother to each.

"I am glad to see you back again,"

observed Trimbush, raising himself from a corner of the court, and stretching his limbs. "I began to think some danger had befallen ye."

"No thanks to you for having escaped it," replied I, somewhat sharply.

"Oh!" rejoined the old hound, carelessly: "in a run it's every hound for himself, and a kick for the hindmost. There's no consideration then."

"What did you do with the varmint?" inquired I, anxious to learn the result of our hunt.

"Within five minutes of tailing you off," replied he, "I ran him from scent to view; and if he had not gone to ground, I'd have broken him up without any sharers in the feast. As it was," he continued, "he was so hot and beaten that he couldn't lie more than a few inches from the mouth of the earth; and there we remained, with our red rags out, panting and grinning at each other for hours. Now and then I had a scratching dig for him; but finding that I could make no progress for the roots, left at last reluctantly, and pointed for home, where I arrived when the stars were twinkling."

"Did you see Ned Adams upon your return?" I inquired.

"No," replied Trimbush. "Mark, the feeder, was waiting for me, knowing that I should be back in the course of the night, let the distance be ever so great; and the good old fellow examined my feet and gave me a good supper, without the least show of bad temper for having kept him from bed."

"The second whip would not have treated ye so," I observed.

"Perhaps not," returned he. "You mustn't suppose, however, that Ned bears any malice. He might feel vexed and chafed at not being able to obey orders, but he always lets bygones *be* bygones."

In the course of discussion relative to the events of our stolen run, and during which the remainder of our companions formed a willing auditory, I asked Trimbush how he discovered the difference between the scent of a dog fox and that of a vixen.

"In the first place," responded he, "it is never so strong; and when she has either laid down her cubs, is about to do so, or has not left off suckling, there is a peculiar odour with her which cannot be mistaken. Now,

most animals,'' continued he, '' as I observed yesterday, have an aversion to kill those in any of the situations just described; but I should have added, *when the purpose is to eat them*. For instance, a stoat will not touch a rabbit when about to litter; but a terrier would kill her in a moment. This is the reason that so few birds are killed whose nests are on the ground. The weazel avoids the partridge and lark whilst setting, and the fox passes the pheasant.''

'' What! '' exclaimed I. '' Won't a fox snap a pheasant from her nest? ''

'' Gamekeepers,'' resumed Trimbush, '' would tell you, ' Always when an opportunity presents itself;' but I know better. A vixen, with a large litter, and food scanty, will do so now and then, I don't deny; but what does she get? Skin, bone, and feathers —a most unsavoury morsel, for which the cubs will scarcely care to fight. The mother knows this well enough, and, unless driven to extremities, never takes any kind of bird from her nest.''

'' The farmer's wife tells a different story,'' I observed.

'' The farmer's wife, like the gamekeeper,

is a sworn enemy to foxes," returned Trimbush, "and with equally groundless cause. If a single head of poultry is missed, the robbery is always ascribed to a fox, and, however devoid of foundation, never forgotten. The old trot dates her subsequent life from the event, and begins her tale with, 'About six months after the fox took my duck,'" and so keeps the matter fresh and vivid to the end of her days."

"One would think you were a preserver instead of a killer of foxes," said I.

"Ay," rejoined the speaker; "if it was not for preserving, we should have no opportunities of killing."

CHAPTER III.

"We will, fair queen, up to the mountain's top,
And mark the musical confusion
Of hounds, and echo in conjunction."

Will Sykes was designed by nature for a huntsman. With a short stature and wiry frame, he possessed activity, indomitable courage, patience, and judgment. His voice, too, seemed to come from his heart, as he cheered with lusty lungs; and his strong grey eyes encompassed a whole parish, when he threw them forward for a view. Good humour sat upon his lip, and there was a great secret in his possession, of being capable of pleasing everybody without any apparent effort. Proud—perhaps a little vain—was our Will of his exterior; but then there might be sufficient cause; for although his short-

cropped hair was grizzled and frosted by time, and a few wrinkles—albeit the joint effects of laughter and age—were stamped on his ruddy cheeks, few could boast of a larger circle of admirers. Will could never pass through a village, in pink and boots, but old women and young—but more especially the young—and mothers and maids flocked to their cottage doors and windows to exchange nods and friendly greetings with him. Ladies, too, of the first degree acknowledged his polite lift of the cap with friendly smiles, and, at convenient seasons, inquired after the health of Mrs. Sykes, and took quite an interest in sundry other of his domesticities and household economy. And was the huntsman's better half—the plump, the prim, the comely Mrs. Sykes—jealous of these attentions? By no means. That excellent and discriminating person considered that the favour in which Will was held by the gentle and simple might be ascribed to her tactics and general measures of expediency; and popularity, she had cogent reasons for supposing, had greatly to do with the liberal capping so invariably bestowed upon the huntsman, whenever his right and

title to the gratuity accrued. Worthy indeed is the care to be recorded with which the worthy dame bleached and starched the cravat, folded and tied without a crease, around Will's neck. The white cords, too, stained as they have been in many a run, with the mud flying in showers over them, are spotless, and without a speck to note the wear and tear of bygone seasons. His tops also bore evidence of a division of Mrs. Sykes's accomplishments. Scratched and rubbed, it is true, they were; but no erasible mark was permitted to remain. His spurs, too, glittered again; and in short, "no baron or squire, or knight of the shire," had greater attention paid to his toilet than had our huntsman.

"Personal appearance," observed Mrs. Sykes to Will, one evening, sitting in a cozy corner of his parlour, in a dreamy, winking, blinking state, lulled by the influence of a blazing yule log—"personal appearance," repeated she, somewhat louder, "is necessary for personal respect; and unless we look as if we respected ourselves, it's unreasonable to suppose that other people will go for to respect us. We must best know," continued she, "our own in'ards; and if we show, by

our out'ards, that they're all gammon and bacon, rest assured they won't pass as the *best* of chitlins."

And was it for this, then—this worldly object—that Mrs. Sykes might be seen on every succeeding Sunday, volume in hand, walking with stately and measured tread along the path leading to the gray-mossed and ivy-twined church? Was it for this that the ribbed silk dress and most treasured bonnet were donned on the seventh day, when the likelihood was great of many eyes beholding them? Was it for this that, from the bright buckle in her shoe to the topmost ribbon stuck jauntily to flutter in the breeze, Mrs. Sykes evinced such elaborate taste and dainty care? Mrs. Sykes, like countless hosts of her betters, would have been justly indignant had such prying interrogatories been put to her for solution, however blandly they might have been effected; and as there is no confession on her part, and no justifiable ground for speculation in the replies, they must remain unanswered to the end of time.

Tom Holt, the first whipper-in, and consequently second in command, was a very different *genus homo* to our huntsman. As

may already have been learned from his expressed opinions and sentiments, he possessed strange quirks and notions, and, to use his own graphic description of his imaginary pedigree, might have been "a cross between a bull-dog and a flat iron." Much nice sophism might be used to support the poetical origin of Tom Holt; but if volumes were written to define his allegory more clearly, the end could not be more satisfactorily arrived at than by briefly saying, "it can far more easily be conceived than described." Tom was a reflective man; he could not see an infant in its mother's arms without the endeavour to picture to his vivid imagination how it would look when bleareyed with age. A piece of thistle-down, whirling here and there, now catching in a bramble, and then skimming along in its varied, uncertain course, would make him think of "cause and effect" for an hour. A dewdrop, a feather in the air, a film of gossamer, often set Tom Holt "a-thinking" for the livelong day. He was a dreamer, and had more strange fantasies, with eyes wide and staring open, than a thousand such will-o'-the wisps fanned by the fairies' midwife, Queen

Mab. And yet Tom Holt, although his face was pale and thin, and his dark hazel eyes always bore a serious look, enjoyed right heartily his duties, and all thereunto pertaining. He studied the attributes and affections of the animals with which he had to deal, and took little less delight in the cunning and subtle tricks of the crafty fox than he did in the sagacity of his darling hounds hunting him. Like many enthusiasts, however, Tom went very strange lengths upon occasions; and it was generally reported in a wide ring in the country, that he asserted, when "much wrought," at the Duck and Gridiron, upon a memorable occasion, "that a spider might teach a weaver more in one hour, than he could learn in a seven years' apprenticeship." Be this as it may, there is no doubt whatever that, upon Tom's recovering consciousness from a stunning fall, causing the blood to flow from his nose profusely, he remarked, brushing a few of the sanguinary drops from the tip of it, that, "he did not see why they shouldn't be blue instead of red." This is an ascertained and acknowledged fact, and, without further detail of his oddities and eccentricities, Tom Holt must be left, like the

cork against the tide, to work his own way.

It appears indispensable—stale as the necessity may prove—to introduce the persons spoken of previously to relating the scenes and incidents in which they may assist. The second whip, Ned Adams, therefore, must not be permitted to escape notice altogether, like one of immaterial consequence and account; and although slight will be the sketch of his virtues, vices, and tendencies, still, to render that which is justly due is but to yield the very bare bones of common honesty. As with the greater number of second whippers-in, Ned was a connexion of the huntsman, and had the right—needlessly, be it said, on the maternal side—to call him "uncle." Ned's uncle embraced divers opportune occasions to impress upon his nephew's mind the onerous duty and essential service which may be performed by a whipper-in if he will only *keep in his place*. "But," observed the huntsman, "most of you hot-blooded young 'uns are so eager to get for'ard, that ye forget the first principles of what you ought to do, and instead of keeping behind, to bring on the tail hounds, hang me if you don't jam to the sterns of the leading ones."

"It's more than mortal patience can endure," replied Ned, by way of justification, "to stick in the rear on some occasions."

"But your duty, Ned," seriously rejoined Will Sykes, "won't bear excuse. It's as much your place to be behind hounds as it is mine to be with them. In my judgment," continued he, "there are but these couple of proper causes for a whip to be seen for'ard: —when hounds are to be stopped, and when ordered to clap to an open earth or hold a fox in covert, if not on such terms that we can run him."

"But you seldom give me the chance of doing the last," returned his nephew.

"And the less the better," added Will Sykes. "It's too much like mobbing a fox to please me; but still there are occasions, as in lifting hounds, to justify us in so doing. If the scent be cold and the fox a long way ahead, so that hounds can't hunt, we must, in order to have any chance, get them nearer to him, and then it is that a whip may get for'ard to the point and head him in."

"But this only applies to a fresh fox, I suppose?" said Ned Adams.

"To be sure," responded his uncle,

" unless, indeed, he's a dying one: for then, as he can show no more sport, the sooner he is killed the better. I'm one of the last men living," continued the huntsman, emphatically, " to kill a fox by either lifting hounds or any other means, except by a fair find—a fair rattle from scent to view, and pulling him down when he can't run any farther. But it isn't every day that we can have such cream of sport; and for any one to say that it's unjustifiable to lift or assist hounds to run when they can't hunt, or that we should never hold a fox in covert, is to acknowledge himself to be too tame a hand for a killer of foxes."

" Nobody will accuse you of being that," rejoined his nephew, laughing, " if they count the noses on the kennel-door at the end of each season."

" I hope not," returned the huntsman, seriously. " I hope," continued he, " that when Will Sykes's tally comes to be reckoned up and squared, those noses will go in the scales with his morals, and make' em kick the beam."

It has been said that Will Sykes possessed a wide circle of admirers; and therefore to be

quite silent upon the matter respecting his nephew, would be an act approaching injustice; for, although the number was more choice, and—to be strictly correct—comprised no old women whatever, yet there is no question but every pretty, young, and unmarried one within the wide range of Ned's jaunts and wanderings might be fairly registered among them. And no wonder; for Ned was spruce and handsome, and had soft looks, and yet softer words, for those with whom he wished to be in favour. His jest and laugh, too, were free and hearty; and wherever he went, "Welcome" awaited him.

The short sketches of those in immediate authority would still be incomplete if Old Mark the Feeder was allowed to escape observation. Whether he possessed a surname is a subject known only to himself; for nobody ever heard him spoken of, or to, but as "Old Mark." From infancy he had been employed in the kennel, and owed his want of promotion to a nervous inability to become a horseman. No exertions on his own part, or those of others, could render him anything like competent to ride to hounds; and the result was that, after a long and patient trial to obtain

this necessary accomplishment for a whipper-in, Mark was compelled to abandon the design, and to fall back on his former position. After this, no second attempt was made; and so years and years rolled on, and at length discovered the failure of a whipper-in in Old Mark the feeder. As may be supposed from his long experience, no one knew more about us than he did; and the moment his practised eye fell on a hound, he could instantly tell a defective point, let it be never so trifling. Proud and enthusiastic in his calling, the courts and lodging-houses were always clean, dry, and wholesome; and, late or early, the old man never allowed the most insignificant part of his duties to pass unfinished. The feet of each were carefully examined after returning home, and if foot-sore, washed with bran, warm water, and vinegar. A warm bath, too was also in readiness, and plenty of clean straw to roll in for the purpose of drying.

Little can be said of Mark's outward man; for his back was crooked—perchance from continually bending over the troughs and copper—and his legs were lean and long, like a daddy-long-legs; but one of the best

attributes of human nature sat reflected in his mild, open, honest face; and that was gentle kindness of heart. Oh! if the world was more thickly populated with "Old Marks," how many hearts and hides would cease to throb with anguish!

CHAPTER IV.

"In the barn the tenant-cock,
Close to partlet, perched on high,
Briskly crows (the shepherd's clock),
Jocund, that the morning's nigh."

With a yawn, a stretch, and a shake, Trimbush completed his toilet one misty morning, just as a neighbouring cock had thrice thrown his chivalrous challenge on the breeze, and invited me, with a crack of his stern across my muzzle, to follow his early example of industry.

"Come," said he, "it's time to be awake and stirring. How do ye fare?"

"Hearty and hungry," replied I, reluctantly arousing myself from a dream of enjoyment.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Trimbush. "You'll have to wait, then," continued he,

" till sunset for a meal, unless you earn a share for yourself."

" How so? " inquired I.

" This will be the first meet o' the season, and your first day of regular work. Mind," said Trimbush, admonishingly, as he showed a long row of very white and strong teeth, " to let me see that you have profited by my lessons and the experience you've had in cub-hunting, or your jacket may be well shaken when least expected."

" You needn't begin to threaten," rejoined I, somewhat indignantly, " without any cause. A rate's well enough," I continued, " when a fault is committed; but there's no occasion to meet it half-way."

" True," returned Trimbush, " quite true; and your remark only proves that a young head may sometimes correct an old tongue, despite what may be said to the contrary. One of the greatest faults with all whippers-in," resumed he, " is the rating us in anticipation of our doing wrong; or, after committing it, before soaking in the double-thong; whereas, they should wait until the cause is given, and then—after blistering us with the flax—proceed to lecture upon the

impropriety of the conduct. It's quite remarkable what effect a sound drubbing has upon the memory."

"I shall not forget the first I received," observed I.

"But you'll never repeat that riot," significantly returned Trimbush. "It was a christening not to slip through the memory as if it had no knots tied in it."

"But then," added I, "in coming across the slot of deer, the scent was so sweet and grateful that I couldn't refrain from carrying a head."

"Well," said Trimbush, "like luxuries of other descriptions, you paid for the enjoyment."

"And dear as the cost was," replied I, "it's very doubtful whether I might not be inclined to have another flutter at the same feather."

"What! swallow a hackle of the dog that bit ye?" rejoined my friend.

"It's a common case, I've heard, with our betters," returned I.

"Right again," added my companion. "Fire puts out fire."

"I suppose," observed I, "that you've

felt, before now, an inclination to repeat an error, convinced as ye may have been of its impropriety.''

'' Ah! '' exclaimed Trimbush, drawing in the breath between his teeth with a hissing sound; '' that I have. We are as clannish as Scotsmen, and support each other through thick and thin, in the same mortar-an'-brick fashion. If one of us is a marked and confirmed rebel, he seldom repeats his fault without lots of company to back him. The season before last, a hound was sent here from the north country, and as sulky and ill-tempered a brute as was ever seen in a kennel. We all hated him; and yet, strange as it may appear, upon Ned Adams attempting to drive him from the lodging-house one morning, in consequence of his refusal to come when called, he flew at him, and, fastening upon his shoulder, was instantly joined by half the hounds in the court.''

'' I can't understand that,'' replied I.

'' The cause lies in our blood and bone,'' rejoined my friend. '' The impulse with us,'' continued he, '' is paramount—to follow the leader however wrong he may be in his example.''

"And what was the finish of this attack on Ned Adams?" inquired I.

"But for his lusty lungs for help," replied Trimbush, "it might have gone hard with him. However, Will Sykes, Tom Holt, and Old Mark quickly made their appearance, and put an end to the fray with little difficulty. As for our new companion, we never saw him afterwards."

"He was sent away, I suppose?" remarked I.

"Yes," returned Trimbush, "to dance in the air with a hempen cord round his throttle."

"And no wonder, either," added I, "for such an offence."

"Breaking up a whipper-in is certainly no joke," said my companion. "But there was one picked as clean as ivory once, without any unpleasant interruption to the spread."

"Gracious powers!" ejaculated I, "what do you mean?"

"Simply what I have said," replied Trimbush, licking his jaws with a peculiar relish, and coolly adding, "I had a hand in the supper."

"You?" I exclaimed.

"Listen," returned the old hound, checking my impetuosity, "and you shall hear. I was not bred in this kennel, but came from the west at the end of my first season. It so happened that about the middle of this season, and when all of us were full of fire and devilry, our regular whipper-in died, and his place became filled by a perfect stranger to us. His cottage being within a short distance, he could hear any quarrel or disturbance, and was ready to quell it at a moment's notice. Trifles light as air, I've heard, will frequently cause the most vital consequences; and such was the case that I am alluding to. A ray of the moon, streaming through a chink in the door of our lodging-house, occasioned a hound of the name of Restless to bay it. This broke the sleep of all; and in a few minutes a regular fight began, each running a-muck and attacking friend and foe with equal want of consideration. In order to quell the row, the whipper-in made his appearance amongst us, as he quitted his bed, undressed; but scarcely had he lifted the latch of the entrance, when —not recognising his voice or his person— he was seized by the throat; and, before the morning light, there was nothing left

but a cleanly picked skeleton.''

'' I'm not surprised at his death, under the circumstances,'' rejoined I; '' but to *eat* him! ''

'' In my opinion,'' added Trimbush, '' that was the most innocent part of the affair.''

'' And how,'' said I, curious to learn further particulars, '' how did he taste? ''

'' Take my word for it,'' replied the old hound, in a tone and manner conveying much conviction of the correctness of the assertion, '' take my word for it,'' repeated he, '' that with a little broth, daintier food could not be eaten.''

'' Who was the first to discover the remains? ''

'' Our feeder,'' returned he.

'' And what did he say? ''

'' Well! '' added Trimbush, scratching an ear with his off hind foot, as if tickled with the reminiscence which the question created, '' I should observe, in the first place,'' continued he, '' that Harry Bolton, our feeder, was one of the coolest fellows that ever boiled a copper of kit, and never known to exhibit the slightest astonishment at anything. Whenever he read an astounding piece of

news in the *County Chronicle*—natural phenomenon, accident, or offence, or anything sufficient to cause the generality of his neighbours' hair to stand on end was related to him—his short unchanging observation was, 'Shouldn't wonder!' However, thought I, the ice of your surprise will be broken at last."

"And was it?" inquired I.

"You shall hear," resumed Trimbush. "When Harry came to the kennel, as was his wont just at break o' day, and his eyes fell on the white bones of the unfortunate whipper-in spread upon the ground, he continued puffing a short black pipe, constantly between his lips, for a few seconds in silence, and then taking it from them with a slow deliberate movement, ejaculated, 'Shouldn't wonder! D—n me if they an't hashed the whip.'"

"And was that all he said?" I asked.

"Every word," returned my companion.

At this moment Will Sykes arrived mounted, accompanied by the two whippers-in; and to his order, Mark threw back the door of the court upon its hinges, and out we rushed with a chorus of merry tongues ringing for our freedom, and the joy that we knew to be in store for us.

"Unkennelling hounds," remarked Trimbush, as we trotted along the road, side by side, "is one great illustrative fact of the difference between high-bred and low-bred animals. A puddle-blooded mongrel, or one of low caste, licks and fondles only the hand that gives him *food;* but we, and all possessing similar tendencies, love him and those who show and give us *sport*. See the difference with which we hail our feeder's appearance, and that of our huntsman. We have affection for both; but there is no comparison between either the kind or strength of the feeling."

"We may like Will, too, all the better," I observed, "on account of his not flogging us."

"A huntsman should never use the thong," replied my companion. "It should be his study to be on such terms of friendship and good-will with his pack, that each hound is ready to fly to his voice like a bird to her nest; and among the varied tempers and dispositions which he has to deal with, this is impossible if he unites with his office the duties of whip."

"I always feel inclined to head just the

other way when I hear Ned Adams,'' observed I.

'' To be sure,'' returned Trimbush. '' The thrashed hound fears the whip; and getting away to his cry of ' for'ard ' is as essential as obeying the huntsman's horn; but the feelings for the two are far from being akin.''

We now turned a sharp angle in the lane, down which we were gently trotting: and on a large open piece of waste ground—the coarse grass, patches of thistles and rushes, being cropped by a few donkeys and a flock of desolate-looking geese—my eyes first saw the assembled members of '' our hunt.''

Deny it who will—it is a heart-stirring, gladsome, inspiring, *English* sight, to witness a country gentleman and popular master in the field. There are his friends and neighbours, his tenants and yeomen, stout and true, his servants and dependents, met together for a noble amusement, and one which unites them in the bond of goodly fellowship. It has been well observed, '' What is a gentleman without his recreations? '' and, to alter the query slightly, it might be said, '' What is a *country* gentleman unless he be a *sportsman?* '' Like a fish out of water, a bull in a

china shop, a bear in a tea-garden, or anything else strangely awkward and much out of his element.

There they were, in showy red and Lincoln green, in leather, cords, and kersey drabs; white tops, brown, and black; hats, caps, and thatch; some mounted and some afoot. From the high-mettled hunter with his shot-silk and glistening coat, to the rough and shaggy tailor's pony; in short, all sizes, shapes, colours, and conditions, might be seen congregated, expectant, and prepared for our arrival.

"Here they are!" shouted an urchin, perched on the topmost limb of a tree. "Here they are!" repeated he, hallooing to the stretch of his lungs; and then a whooping crew of his fellows took up the cry, making the welkin echo with their din.

"Your servant, gentlemen," said Will Sykes, touching the peak of his cap; and during a short delay, waiting the arrival of the Squire, he proceeded to point out the young hounds, making me an especial object of notice.

"What's his pedigwee?" lisped a pale-faced gentleman in spectacles, famous for

riding hard along roads and over nothing but hounds at check.

"By Osbaldeston's Furrier out of Crafty, sir," replied the huntsman.

"By Fuvvier out of Quafty!" repeated the interrogator.

"Yes," rejoined Will; "and I'm much mistaken if he doesn't equal the celebrity of his father."

"What do you call him?" further inquired he of the ghostly countenance.

"Ringwood, sir," returned the huntsman.

"Wingwood, eh?" added the questioner.

"That's one of the sort," said Trimbush to me, "I was mentioning some time ago. He comes out just to show himself and have an excuse for wearing a red coat; but as for taking any interest in either the sport or us, he fears the one and knows nothing of the other. A man, from age, or other causes, may be unable to ride straight and live with us, and yet take as much pleasure in joining the meet, nicking in, and pottering on to the end of a run, as those who are in the first flight from the find to the finish; but I am certain, from what I have seen, that if a man is so naturally timid as to be afraid to ride to

hounds, he can never be—in the sense of the word—a foxhunter.''

"And who is he?" I asked, pointing to a thick-set and jolly-looking man in a green coat, and occupied in the act of taking up the girths of his saddle.

"A very different description of sportsman,'' replied Trimbush; "that's farmer Stockdale, a tenant of the Squire's, who has forgotten more about hounds and hunting than the majority of men ever learn. You see,'' he continued, "that he's making a careful examination of his horse, and the few alterations necessary, whilst there is plenty of time; as none but the greenhorns leave them to the last moment. I remember a man, upon one occasion, tightening a curb-chain at the moment we unkennelled our fox; and such were the impatient plunges of his horse, that he could not mount him again in time to get away with us, and he never saw an inch of the run—long and gallant as it proved.''

My attention being turned to a young man superbly mounted, and dressed with the most scrupulous care, I inquired of my companion if he was one of the timid school.

"No,'' rejoined Trimbush; "*that* he is

not. From the delicate look of his boots, breeches and gloves, one might feel disposed to imagine that he was not in the habit of dirtying them; but so far from that being the case, he is not only the boldest but the best rider in the hunt—for the two do not always go together. It used to be thought," continued he, " by men of the old school, that a white top was the certain mark of a he-haw, know-nothing, gal-drawing, watering-place snob; but I have no hesitation in saying that the white tops of the present day could show the dark and mahogany ones their heels without the slightest difficulty, or more than ordinary exertion."

" You think, then, that men ride bolder and better now? " I remarked.

" Without a doubt of it," replied Trimbush. " The stamp of horse—thorough-bred and up to the mark in condition—the pace we go, and the modern style of *racing* a fox down, require both bolder and better riding than in the days when they found him at cock-crow and killed him at noon. Not only is courage indispensable to be near the ' sinking one,' but hands, head, and heels must be exercised with the best of judgment. I grin,"

continued he, "to see a first-flight man, after a fifteen minutes' burst, blown to a stand-still; while farmer Stockdale gives him the go-by with his goose-rumped, short-legged, long-necked nag, just in the wind."

"And does that often take place?" I inquired.

"Very frequently," replied my companion. "Head and hands will beat heels all the world over."

At this moment the Squire came trotting briskly up on his hack; and as he rode through the throng, hats were lifted and salutations exchanged. Our master, be it remembered, although an old English gentleman, was not a gentleman of the old school. He neither swore the roundest oaths, nor horsewhipped those whom he dared or could afford to pay; he boasted not of the number of bottles it took to make him oblivious of sublunary matters, or laughed only at the practical joke and coarsest jest. His object was not to be the oracle of grooms and stable-boys, or the subject of discussion in the village tap-room. With an affable bearing, he possessed a kind and generous disposition, and a heart more ready to befriend the deserving and destitute than

to check the imposter and depraved. His house was one wherein hospitality reigned the seasons round; and it mattered not who were the guests, a hearty welcome awaited each and all. In the pursuit, too, of his favourite sport, he never permitted an injury to pass unrecompensed, although careful that no false application should succeed. Not a gate nor a bar was broken, a head of poultry lost *suspiciously*, or the most trifling damage done, but what, instantly and liberally, amends were made. Sternly discountenancing all unfair riding over wheat, young grass, and layers, he was regarded by the farmers as a friend to their interests; and so far from objecting to a fixture in their neighbourhood, they were glad when it came to their turn. By proper and simple judicious means the end is always attainable; and if those masters of hounds who complain of a dearth of foxes, and opposition to their sport, would but take a memorandum out of the note-book of "our Squire," many a blank day might be rendered as fruitful as the vine "clustering with a thousand rings."

"HEAD AND HANDS WILL BEAT HEELS."

CHAPTER V.

"For easy the lesson of the youthful train
When instinct prompts, and when example guides."

"I HOPE I'm to my time," said the Squire, pulling out his watch. "Yes," continued he, glancing at the dial, "to a minute."

Immediately after the Squire's arrival, we were thrown into the cover, and, when about the middle of it, I saw Trimbush feather his stern, and before I could reach him he threw his tongue, and, as he did so, Will Sykes gave a cheer which Echo took pleasure to repeat.

"Hark to Trimbush! Hark to Trimbush! Have at him! Whoop!"

We clustered to him, and, poking my nose to the ground, I drew in a scent which made

every hackle on my body stiffen with delight. Up went my head, and forth I sent some music that came from my very heart.

"See that puppy," said the Squire. "How he loves it."

"Have at him, Ringwood," hallooed the huntsman, rising in his stirrups. "Have at him, good hound!" and then, turning to the Squire, I heard him remark, "He's a perfect wonder, sir."

"Yes," was the reply, "he's the most promising I have ever seen."

We now got to our fox in a body, and crashed him through the cover. Full swing we flew, and, as we swept out of the furze, I was astonished to lose the scent which we had carried so strong up to the corner of the brake, and flung myself here and there to pick it up again. Most of us were sorely puzzled for a few seconds, when Trimbush, after stooping his nose to the ground for some distance, down wind and up, along the verge of the cover, said to me, "The artful dodger's slipped back, and shot into the brake again."

"Tally-ho! tally-ho! Gone away," hallooed a voice from the farthest end of the cover.

"I told you so," said Trimbush. "We were too close to him, and he headed back to make the distance greater at the burst."

I now sniffed the scent again, and, thinking I was showing off, made as much noise as I possibly could.

"Keep your tongue still," snapped Trimbush. "Like most puppies, two-legged and four, if they possess a good voice, they seldom exhibit equal good sense in using it."

Twing, twing, twang, twa—a—ng, went Will Sykes's horn, as he jammed his horse through bush and briar.

"For'ard, for'ard," shouted Tom Holt. "Get to him, hounds, get to him."

"Come along," said Trimbush. "Stick to me."

"What a clean, fine, lengthy fellow he is!" I heard some one remark. "His point's Picton Brake."

"Yes," replied another. "His brush must be two feet: and what a snowy tag to it!"

"Indeed!" observed Trimbush. "Then we'll give it such a dusting as to change its colour pretty quickly."

A bunch of old hounds flew out of cover with us, and, taking up the scent, away we

rattled in a body, as close as a swarm of bees.

"They won't over-ride us to-day," remarked I.

"Not if the scent lasts as good as it is," replied Trimbush; "but that's doubtful."

For fifteen minutes we burst him along as hard as we could split. The day was fine and warm, and, sinking the wind, the pace began to tell most terribly upon some of us young ones.

"I feel very choky," said I, doing my best to keep my place.

"Hold on," returned Trimbush. "He must have crossed the Kulm stream, and there we shall get a cooling plunge."

In a handful of seconds we neared the water, and dashed into it with as much delight as a flock of thirsty ducks.

"Now," said Trimbush, "you'll be able to reach the brake, where, I'd bet my stern to a buck rabbit's scut, he'll hang as long as he can and dare."

"Why so?" inquired I.

"Why so!" repeated Trimbush, rather contemptuously. "Because he must know by this time that he can't outrun us. The scent's

too good, and we got away with him on such terms that nothing but reaching a strong earth, or changing to a fresh fox, can save him."

"We must try to keep to our hunted one," said I, thinking it was exhibiting some wisdom.

"Try!" repeated my friend; "of course we shall try. We always do; but it's sometimes impossible to distinguish the difference between the scent of our hunted fox and a fresh one. It's easy enough, when a fox is viewed, to know, because it can be seen whether he's been shoved along at the expense of his bellows and toilet; but our noses can't be depended upon."

As Trimbush said, upon gaining the brake we found the fox hanging in it; and, although very hot, we gave him such a towelling, that, so far from improving his condition, he had better have taken to his pads and faced the open. I saw him a dozen times in cover, and his red rag hung from his open jaws, and his brush dragged along the ground. We pressed him up and down across the rides at a killing pace, and although there was no bullying by holding him in cover, and every opportunity

given him to quit it, he still stuck to his quarters.

"You shall either run or die," said Trimbush, going through the cover like a bullet.

A clear, musical "Tally-ho" now echoed far and wide.

"Gone away at last, eh?" observed my friend, and, throwing up his head, he rushed to the halloo.

"Hold hard!" roared the Squire, as one, too eager, rode nearly over me as I leaped from the cover. "You almost killed, sir," continued he, "the best of my young entry, and perhaps the most valuable puppy I ever bred."

"I beg your pardon, sir; but my horse pulls so, that——"

"Then he is not fit to ride to hounds, sir," hastily rejoined the Squire.

Being high on our mettle, we flashed forward, after just touching the scent on a dry-lying fallow, thinking that we had struck on his line; but Trimbush, and a few of the old hounds, soon found that they were wrong, and, throwing up their heads, came to a check.

"Let them alone," said the Squire, as Will

Sykes indicated a disposition to make a hasty cast down wind. "Let them alone," repeated he.

"He's certain to be making for the belt of covers on the ridge, sir," replied Will, "and the ploughs are so dry that it is impossible for hounds to carry it over them."

"Let them alone," quietly rejoined the Squire. "Let them alone."

"When allowed to make our own casts, which we always should at first," remarked Trimbush, poking his nose to the ground, "we try down wind first, because that's the way foxes constantly run. It's time enough to cast up when we've made good the cast down. Humph!" continued he, as if puzzled, "I begin to think Will's wrong."

"What do you mean?" inquired I.

"I don't fancy he's pointed for the covers on the ridge," returned Trimbush; "let's see whether he hasn't headed back," continued he.

We now tried up wind, and, sure enough, hit it off again under a hedgerow.

"Ha, ha!" laughed Trimbush. "He's a sinking one, and has turned to die."

We now rattled on full swing over a

common, and on climbing a steep hill I saw a magpie darting to the ground and then rising high in the air to swoop again.

"What's that chattering pie doing?" inquired I, directing Trimbush's attention to the bird.

"Mobbing him," replied he. "The magpie, jay and crow love to mob a sinking fox. Keep your eye forward; it will soon be from scent to view."

"Are those covers strong?" I asked, seeing that we were making for a long line of trees.

"Little more than spinnies," replied my friend. "He can't hang in them a minute."

We drove him through these little covers without let, check, or stop; and at the last, out he flew in view of all of us. We rushed at him like greyhounds from the slips; but, with a desperate effort to save his life, he managed to dash round the corner of a barn, and, as we turned, I saw him slipping along on the top of a thick square-topped hawthorn fence, and, springing upon the trunk of a tree covered with ivy, disappear. None of the others saw this artful dodge; but all flashed forward, and were bewildered at not either

viewing or being able to hit him off. Trimbush flung himself here and there in a perfect fury, and would not pay the smallest attention to what I had to say.

"Put your nose down and work," said he passionately, "don't talk to me."

"But I tell you——"

"Pshaw!" interrupted Trimbush. "What's your head in the air for?"

"Because the *fox* is in the air," replied I.

"What do you mean?" asked he, seeing that I was serious.

I then told him that which I had seen, and inquired what I should do.

"Hold your tongue," returned the artful old rogue; "it shows a wise head, I've heard. Leave the matter to me."

In order to monopolize the whole of the credit to himself, Trimbush galloped to the tree and dashed at it, in the attempt to climb the knarled and knotted trunk.

"What's that hound about?" said the Squire, looking greatly astonished.

I now saw that Trimbush would get all the praise of discovering our fox's hiding place, and felt greatly vexed with myself that I had not gone at once to the tree and thrown my

tongue. The rest now clustered round the leader, who, managing to stick and cling to the ivy, got some dozen feet from the ground.

"He's gone to tree, sir," said Will Sykes, exultingly, as he threw himself from the saddle.

"That he has," returned the Squire, scarcely knowing which to be — more astonished or pleased.

To the infinite surprise of the field, who came dropping up one by one, they saw the huntsman drag a fox by the brush from a hollow in the tree, and catching him by the neck to prevent the visitation of his grinders, hold him up over his head with a halloo that might wake the dead.

"Who-whoop, who-whoop!" cried Tom Holt.

"Who-whoop, who-who-whoop!" hallooed Ned Adams, in his good and choice voice, which always had the effect of working us into a frenzy.

"He'd give us a run now," lisped a young gentleman in pink, "if he was turned down and had a little law given him."

I could have bitten his head off.

"My hounds deserve their fox, sir," replied

A CURIOUS FINISH.

the Squire. "He is beaten, and nothing but an accidental escape—like this might have been—could have saved him. There have been no unfair means used, from the find to the finish; and the only illiberal, unsportsman-like act, would be now to run the risk of robbing the hounds of that which they have justly won and made their own."

Not exactly among us, but not far from where I stood—I think Will did it on purpose to please me—the fox was thrown, and my teeth were the first to fix themselves across his loins. I had been taught in cub-hunting not to gripe elsewhere; but as it was, he gave me a nasty pinch in the cheek.

In a few moments afterwards he was given to us to be broken up, and then somebody asked the Squire "if he would not try for another fox, as it was early?"

"No," replied our master, shaking his head. "We are fifteen miles from kennel. The hounds have had a good deal of fatiguing work in cover, and are satisfied with a novel but glorious finish. I shall not run the risk of tiring them more, perhaps for nothing, and doing away with that spirit which the sport of the day must have given, I hope, to every

one present.'' And lifting his hat, string high, he bowed and joined the side of his huntsman.

As we trotted along down a bye road, with our sterns well up over our backs, and feeling as proud as peacocks, I heard Will Sykes remark, " It was a good forty minutes, sir.''

" Yes,'' replied his master with a slight smile, " but it would not have been so long if you had made that cast.''

" If I had done *that*, sir,'' replied the huntsman, dropping his voice to a whisper, " if I had done that, sir,'' repeated he, " *we should have lost our fox.*''

" Let them alone, eh?'' rejoined the Squire, smiling more perceptibly.

" Ay,'' returned Will. " *Let them alone* is a beautiful rule.''

CHAPTER VI.

"See, the day begins to break,
And the light shoots like a streak
Of subtle fire; the wind blows cold
While the morning doth unfold:
Now the birds begin to rouse,
And the squirrel from the boughs
Leaps to get him nuts and fruit:
The early lark that erst was mute,
Carols to the rising day
Many a note and many a lay."

I WOKE the following morning soon after the first tinge of day had streaked the east, and found myself terribly stiff and foot-sore. My nose, too, was hot, and I felt very thirsty.

"What's the matter?" asked Trimbush, waking, as I gave a whine of uneasiness.

"I'm not well," replied I, limping from the bench.

"Oh, it's nothing to care about," replied he, yawning and stretching his limbs.

"Yesterday's work has taken the steel and wire out of ye, that's all."

"It does not appear to have touched you," rejoined I.

"Me!" returned Trimbush, grinning so that he showed every tooth in his head. "Do you know, youngster, what you are?"

"Yes," answered I proudly: "one who does his duty, and gives as much satisfaction as any of you *oldsters*."

"Well, well!" responded he, "I must admit that you allow yourself to be *taught;* and both the duty and satisfaction which you give at present are concentrated in that one great and good quality."

Feeling somewhat humbled at this reply, and smarting under the advantage taken of me the day before, I added sharply, "There was no teaching me to instruct you how to obtain all the credit of the finish yesterday."

"Hear, hear, hear," said one of our companions called Chancellor.

"At him again!" exclaimed a spaded bitch named Levity, and of the same age as myself. "Take a suck at the lemon, and at him again!"

"You're a sharp lot," replied the old

hound, with a mingled look of contempt and indifference, "a very sharp lot indeed. I couldn't think,' he continued, turning to me, "what made the tip of your stern curl over your head and tickle your nose until now. I have heard of a French poodle's being so stiff in the bend that he couldn't get his hind legs to the ground; but hang me if your conceit is not about a match for his."

"But you must admit," observed Chancellor, "that without him we should not have broken up our fox yesterday."

"Well!" returned Trimbush, "and supposing I *do* admit it, what then?"

"You should not have snatched the honour from him," replied Levity.

"Honour?" rejoined Trimbush. "Pooh! The honour was already gained before we mouthed the fox. We all like blood for the finish—men as well as hounds—but it does not follow that there may not be quite as much credit due to both without a *who-whoop* as with it. For instance," continued he, "if that youngster Ringwood had had his nose to the ground—as he should have done the moment the fox was lost to view, instead of occupying himself by stargazing—we should,

in all probability, have lost our fox. What would have caused us to have done so? A mere accident, for which no one would have been to blame. And what, let me ask, enabled us to obtain a more desirable result? Just as accidental a circumstance. Honour? Fudge!"

"At any rate," said Chancellor, "I heard everybody praising what they called your sagacity for discovering the fox in the tree."

"It's the way with those fools of men," replied Trimbush. "They often laud that in us which deserves no praise whatever, and pass by in silence some of our most remarkable accomplishments."

I felt that there was much truth in Trimbush's argument; and although a sly twinkle in his eyes led me to suspect that he made thus light of my information for a selfish purpose, I lost a great deal of the vanity which I hitherto had entertained from being the agent of so fine a finish.

"You chanced to remark yesterday," said I, "that foxes constantly run down wind. Why do they? Is it to render the scent less strong for us?"

"Certainly not," responded Trimbush.

"The scent has nothing whatever to do with it, notwithstanding what a parcel of cackling geese may have said and written. The truth is, a fox is a timid, sly animal with extraordinary quick ears and eyes, and a famous nose. When found, he, of course, must break where there's an opening; and as no men place themselves up wind of us, or very seldom, that side is generally left free, and away he rattles *up wind* at the burst. I am now, of course, speaking of the rule, and not the exceptions. He does not go far, however, before he smells, hears, or sees something unpleasant, which turns him either to the right or left. Another lurking cause of suspicion that there's an enemy in front, as well as those in the rear turns him again, and so on until he gets his head straight down wind, when, smelling and hearing nothing before him, he tries to make his point and get out of the reach of our ringing cries, and, as he knows full well—whetted appetites."

"That sounds reasonable," remarked I.

"Thank you," rejoined the old hound, flourishing his stern. "I'm flattered with your approval."

"I noticed that the scent continued to

improve after the first ten minutes," said I, "until within a short time of running him to view, when it seemed to gradually die and become more faint."

"It not only seemed," replied Trimbush, "but it did so, and from obvious reasons. Every animal with a skin—and I don't remember at this moment any without," facetiously continued he, "smells stronger when hot than cold. Fear often produces the same effect, but from the like cause—as any excitement, whether pleasurable or the reverse, produces physical heat. Now, after a fox is found, his scent *increases*—although, from the state of the weather and ground, we may not be able to hunt him a yard, nevertheless—so long as *exhaustion* does not take place; and then as he sinks, so does the scent *decrease*. The reasons for this," continued Trimbush, "are as simple as they are indubitable. The perspirable matter escaping through the skin augments for a time from exertion, and the devil of a fright he is in from our rattling behind him: but this begins to die away after excessive evaporation, and often has caused us to lose a fox scarcely able to crawl."

"I thought the scent came from the pads," remarked Levity.

"And what made ye think that?" sneered the old hound.

"I don't exactly know," replied Levity; "but certainly such was my opinion."

"Then never express such a foolish one for the future," rejoined Trimbush. "If it came from the foot, how could we carry a good head in a body, and each have a fair share of the scent? We should have to run and follow each other in a string, and one or two might do the work, after drawing, as well as twenty or five-and-twenty couples. Again, if it came from the foot, how could we carry it through water. I say, and ought to know something about the matter," continued the old hound, emphatically, "that the scent proceeds from the entire animal. The back, belly, head, foot, brush, and—and—and—exactly so, and every part else."

Old Mark was now heard approaching, which at once put a stop to the discussion; and as soon as the good old man saw that I was lame he examined my feet and washed them with something which he took from a bottle hung by a piece of string to the button-hole of

his frock. A few others he served in the same way; and calling us each by name, let us into another court, saying, "You puppies shall feed by yourselves this morning; you all want a little nursing, I find."

Will Sykes entered soon afterwards, and, seeing Mark's arrangement for our comfort, observed, "That's right; those puppies want taking care of."

"Ay," replied Mark, smoothing down my sleek ears and patting my sides, "I hear some of 'em deserve it."

"That Ringwood," rejoined the huntsman, "is more like a third-seasoned hound than a puppy at the beginning of his first."

Old Mark's eyes glistened again at this; and looking at me for a few seconds as I lashed my stern to and fro and stared him full in the face, to let him understand I knew all that was being said of me, he muttered, "If a draft of hounds ever goes to heaven, you'll be one of 'em, my lad."

All this praise tended to make me a little vainer than I otherwise should have been, perhaps; but at the same time it fixed my resolution to merit as much as I could of it. And I have often thought since, that there is

nothing like encouragement to the young and inexperienced. The difficulties of attaining anything worth learning are always great, and using harsh and severe means on the part of the teachers only makes the attempt more painful and repulsive. Punishment is, occasionally, indispensable for obstinacy or repeated offences; but there is nothing like a cheer for improvement.

After breakfast, and when we were all assembled in the court, the subject of scent was again renewed by Levity observing, in a confidential whisper to me, but which was overheard by Trimbush, "that she very much questioned the correctness of the old hound's opinion concerning it."

"You question?" snarled Trimbush. "We shall certainly hear," continued he, "of mewling, puking babes teaching their grandmothers to suck eggs, by and bye."

Levity looked abashed at this satirical remark, and, burying her nose between her fore feet, appeared resolved to give herself to silence bordering on the sulky.

"There's nothing so puzzling, nothing so difficult to comprehend by the best and most experienced of us," said Trimbush, address-

ing me, "as the philosophy of scent; and yet, forsooth, we are to be told by a babbling puppy that——"

"Well, well!" said I, interrupting his irate speech, "don't get in a passion about a trifle."

"Right," replied my friend, smoothing the bristling hackles on his back. "Quite right. Life is made up of trifles, as the hours are of seconds, days of hours, years of days, and ages of years. Life's trifles are the atoms in unity, forming the whole."

Not wishing to enter into a discussion of this sort, I led Trimbush back to the original subject by saying, "I should like to hear a little more about the philosophy of scent."

"There is little more to add," returned he, "as far as I know. Depending, as I have before said, on the weather, which changes sometimes three or four times in a day, and the state of the ground, the rule is, that it is invariably uncertain. In windy weather we are often accused of being wild and flashy; but the fact is, that the particles of scent being widely spread and wafted about, one hits it here, another there, and we fly from one to the other, each thinking that some are on

the right line, and may slip away with it unseen down wind. There is nothing more tiresome than a gale of wind in hunting, both to us and men. We can't hear each other, and they can't hear us; and it is matter of doubt to me which is the worst of the two—a thick fog, or a blowing gusty wind. I may here remark,'' continued Trimbush, '' that there is a strange fact connected with scent, which I have not heard attempted to be accounted for. On the going off of a frost, we can run the drag hard, right up to the kennel, and yet be unable to run an inch afterwards.''

'' That seems very singular,'' said I.

'' I suppose it to be,'' resumed my companion, '' that the scent clings to whatever the animal rubs against or passes over during the night; and having gone slowly, a greater portion is emitted, which is preserved by the frost, and the thaw having loosened the particles, enables us to take them up.''

'' But how do you account for not being able to run after he is unkennelled? '' asked I.

'' Because his skin is cold; and going at a greater pace, there is not sufficient time for the small quantity of scent escaping to lie strong enough to overcome the exhalations

from the ground, occasioned by the warmth of the day.''

This sage reasoning on the part of Trimbush made me feel very small in my own estimation, and I made up my mind to follow his advice for some time to come, and listen rather than give tongue.

CHAPTER VII.

"To hear the lark begin his flight,
And singing startle the dull night,
From his watch-tower in the skies,
Till the dappled dawn doth rise;
Then to come in spite of sorrow,
And at my window bid good morrow,
Through the sweet-briar, or the vine,
Or the twisted eglantine.

* * * * *

Oft listening how the hounds and horn
Cheerly rouse the slumbering morn."

"I HATE this meet," observed Tom Holt, as we arrived at four cross ways close to the market town nearest our kennel. "I hate this meet worse than any we have in the country."

"It's not a pleasant one, certainly," replied the huntsman.

"Pleasant?" repeated Tom. "In the first place there's a nasty, close, woodland country with banks as high as churches. Then

we have a pack of riff-raff counterskippers to over-ride hounds, halloo, head the fox, and play the devil. And as if this was not enough for one blessed day's misery the Squire himself generally finds fault all day long with everybody and everything, when the fixture's at these four cross ways."

"We had better christen them the cross purposes then," returned Will Sykes.

"I don't mean to say," continued Tom, without noticing the huntsman's remark, "but he may have—heaven knows!—lots of causes to put him out of temper; still it's rather hard to feel oneself suffering for the faults of others."

"It is not an unusual circumstance, though," said Will Sykes. "I have often heard of similar instances unconnected with hounds and hunting."

Some of the field had arrived before us, and others were trotting briskly up, the hoofs of their horses clattering along the roads in all directions.

"We must look out for ourselves to-day," said Trimbush, "or there will be cases for the hospital."

"They are a rough-looking set," replied I,

glancing at some thirty horses, not one of which would fetch ten pounds, and all in a high state of perspiration, with their riders puffing cigars and smelling of all kinds of horrible mixtures. I felt quite ill, and a little more would have turned my stomach.

"If any of these gentlemen," remarked Trimbush, sneezing, "of high rank and particular smell, get down wind of us to-day, we shall not be able to hunt a yard."

"What a dreadful thing it is," returned I, "that men should make themselves so offensive. I don't suppose they have any noses, have they?"

"Can't you see they have?" replied my companion.

"But it doesn't follow that they are any use," said I.

"Well!" added Trimbush, "as far as that goes I don't think they are, although I have heard of some men capable of smelling a rat."

A few of the gentlemen who regularly joined us now came up on their hacks, and instantly afterwards their clothed and hooded hunters, being led up and down by neatly dressed and light-weight grooms, were

stripped and mounted by their respective owners. The contrast was strangely striking between these and the "roughs," and, perhaps, caused my admiration to be greater as I regarded each climbing into the pigskin.

Our master, as was his wont, and which should be that of every one entitled to the dignity of a M.F.H., made his appearance to the minute of the hour fixed, and, lifting his hat, saluted the field generally, while he gave his hand, and exchanged warmer salutations with his friends and associates.

Our first draw was Pickton brake, a large furze cover about a mile and a half from the meet, and there we trotted with the gratifying expectation of a sure find.

"Mind what I say," remarked Trimbush, "if you don't keep your eyes and ears backward as well as forward to-day, you will have a dozen horses go over ye and not a bone left in your skin unbroken. Be quick as lightning, and if you flash over the scent, never mind; don't throw up and check if there's a chance of being ridden over. I never do. It's not our fault if they won't give us room."

"I'll take care of myself," replied I.

Upon nearing the cover the office was given, and into it we dashed, and shortly afterwards the whimperings in various parts proved that there was more than one fox in it. I hit upon a drag and opened loudly, when Trimbush reproved me, after poking his nose where I had mine, saying, "Not so noisy, not so noisy. Let's have a distinction between opening on a drag, and a good hearty challenge when he's found."

An old favourite line hunter, called Rasselas, now threw his tongue.

"That's it," said Trimbush, flying to the cry, and taking it up, his roar thundered through the brake.

"Have at him!" hallooed Will Sykes. "Have at him, hoik. Hoik, hoik together!"

It was evident that a brace was on foot, and the Squire, looking more serious than usual, desired that the field might move away from one side of the cover and be quiet, otherwise there was a probability of a chop taking place.

About a minute afterwards, out came a fine, lengthy dog-fox.

"Tally-ho!" shrieked a muffin on a hired knacker, and back the fox dived into the brake again.

"It is most strange, sir," said the Squire, riding up to the side of the offender, "that you should give yourself the trouble of hallooing, I pay three servants to do that work, and, although I am extremely obliged for your voluntary assistance, I shall feel much more indebted, as will many of the gentlemen present, if, for the rest of the day, you'll hold your tongue."

I never saw a muffin so browned in the whole course of my life. If he had been sworn at and called a parcel of hard names—which always recoil upon the utterers of them—he might have been made more angry; but nothing could be more effective than the rate from the cutting, gentlemanlike tone and manner which accompanied it.

In consequence of being scared with this halloo, the fox showed the greatest disinclination to break a second time, and the day being very warm, and the cover strong, we began to feel as if a spider had been spinning cobwebs in our throats.

"It's choking work this," said I.

"Yes," replied Trimbush. "There's no wind here. Let's press him as hard as we can; for he feels it as well as us, recollect."

We now rattled him up to the top of the cover, and, crossing a ride, Will Sykes viewed him, and giving us a ringing view-halloo, convinced us we were on our hunted fox.

"There's a leash a-foot, sir," said the huntsman, as the Squire now came to his assistance.

"Then get them as near to him as you can," replied the Squire, "and prevent them getting on the other lines."

Ned Adams now viewed the fox in a broad open ride, and hallooed, "Tally-ho!"

"Never mind," said Trimbush, as I was about leaving the scent to fly to the halloo. "Ned Adams, like yourself," continued he, "is young and cannot be depended upon. Keep your nose down; we are quite close enough to carry him over the other lines of scent without changing."

Immediately afterwards I heard the Squire ask in a loud, angry voice, "Why did you halloo?"

"Because I viewed the hunted fox, sir," replied Ned, touching his cap deferentially.

"Where?"

"At the bottom of the ride, sir."

"And you standing at the top," returned the Squire, "when you must hear that the body is well settled to him, halloo them away. What could be your object?"

"I thought the stragglers——"

"Would rather fly to their tongues than to your foolish halloo," interrupted the Squire, "or you ought to have thought so."

"You see," added Trimbush, "I was right. But all young 'uns think they know everything, and the study and experience of the oldsters go for nothing."

We had now given him such a dusting that he could hang no longer, and Tom, holding up his hat at the farthest end of the brake up wind, quietly announced that he had gone away.

Following Will, crashing through the furze, I heard Tom say to him, "He's just crossed the road," pointing with his whip to the exact spot.

We flew in a body to it, and, taking up the scent, away we went.

"Get on," said Trimbush, "and we may, perhaps, shake off the rabble and have a run. It's our only chance."

We carried a fine head across the first field

of some thirty acres of grass, and crossing two wide ditches—which would be called brooks in some counties—we began to hope that these would prove of essential service in stopping the mob. A blind bullfinch, too, increased our sanguine hopes on this head, and we began to flatter ourselves that a good day's sport was in store, when we had to throw up and check.

"That ploughman's headed him," said Trimbush, making a cast to the right, "and he's down wind as sure as I'm a foxhound."

He was right, and hitting it off, with an improving scent, we down with our sterns and raced along at our best pace. A large flock of sheep was before us, and, notwithstanding they ran some distance, we managed to carry it through the stained ground, with a little careful picking, without much loss of time. I saw Will Sykes in doubt as to whether he should not cast us forward; but thinking, perhaps, of the sensible rule of "letting us alone," and as we did not throw up, he, luckily for himself, kept his horn quiet. Had he twanged it he would have had the Squire about his ears.

As the ground was good and we had a turn

of wind in our favour, we set to work and soon recovered the little time lost through the sheep. There was now every probability of having a glorious day's sport. The field had been thinned materially at the burst, and those with us were not near enough to do any harm.

"It will be short and fast to-day," said Trimbush, exultingly.

The scent was now a burning one, and we all bristled for blood. Across three deep fallows we carried it in great force into and across a green lane, flanked by two tall quicks, when suddenly the leading hounds threw up.

"What's the matter?" inquired several, throwing up their heads.

"Find out," briefly replied Trimbush, doing his best to accomplish the deed himself.

In a few seconds the lane became full of horses; for it is wonderful how courageous men are in spinning along the roads. Some came screaming up and cracking their whips, and instead of sticking to our work we began flying about in every direction.

The Squire scolded, Will roared, Tom lost his patience, and Ned Adams thundered out "Hold har-r-r-d!" until black in the face.

"HOLD HAR-R-R-D!"

At this juncture, a fellow with his hat hanging by the string, his long lank hair streaming in the wind, coat tails sticking well out, and his horse's head close to his chest, came tearing up the lane. Bang he went against me, rolling me over and over like a football. I thought my back was broken, and sung out with pain and fright most lustily.

"William," said the Squire, sternly. "Take the hounds home."

Will touched his cap, and the order was obeyed.

CHAPTER VIII.

"Oh! what avails the largest gifts of heaven
When drooping health and spirits go amiss?
How tasteless then whatever can be given;
Health is the vital principle of bliss."

"LICK that stain off your flank," said Trimbush, pointing to the dirt on my side.

"Why should I be so particular?" replied I, obeying his instructions, "we don't go out to-day."

"No," rejoined he; "but the Squire's coming to inspect us, and, I suppose, you'd like to appear nice and comely in *his* eyes."

"What do you mean by that?" I asked, applying my tongue more diligently to the completion of my toilet.

"You'll see in a few minutes," added Trimbush, "and if everything isn't in

gingerly order, I'll bet a week's meal and broth, those will hear of it who are responsible for their neglect."

The greatest neatness and cleanliness were always observed in our kennel; but I noticed old Mark had put a polish on his shoes, and a white neckerchief was tied, with much skill displayed in the bow, round his throat. Will Sykes, too, Tom Holt, and Ned Adams, upon entering the court, exhibited more care than usual in their dress on non-hunting days.

The huntsman, glancing round and seeing all was unobjectionable as far as his hope and belief went, pulled a watch out of his fob, and observed that " the Squire will be here in seven minutes three-eighths."

" Can you time him to a second? " said Mark smiling

" Ay," replied Will, " it doesn't require a gauge to do that with his rules."

As a distant clock was striking, the bell rung at the kennel door.

" I said so," remarked the huntsman, and upon opening it he lifted his hat, and in walked our worthy master.

" Now for my frock," said he, and one as white as snow was brought by old Mark, who

was sensitively jealous of the privilege of assisting the Squire to make his kennel toilet.

When attired he proceeded to the boiling-house, examined the boiling flesh, coppers, and everything belonging to that department. Then turning into the feeding-room, he looked at the troughs and expressed himself satisfied with the perfect order that all things were in belonging to this.

In going to the lodging rooms, Will Sykes said, "How would you like to have them drawn, sir?"

"Each hound singly," replied the Squire, "and the entry first."

It was some little time before it came to my turn; but when my name was called out I sprang, and as soon as I made my appearance, the Squire took a piece of biscuit from his pocket and throwing it to me, said "Here Ringwood, beauty," and caressed me kindly.

One or two of my young companions evinced some temper and jealousy at this, and growled deeply with up-reared hackles.

"Come, come," hallooed Tom, correctingly, and a crack from his thong soon silenced the grumblers.

"His nose is hot," observed the Squire,

touching my nostrils, and standing a few feet back followed up the remark by saying, "What is that redness on his flank?"

"A little heat, I think, sir," replied the huntsman, making a more careful examination of me.

"Then cool him," was the reply, "and let him stay at home to-morrow."

I was very sorry to hear this order given; for although I felt far from being in health, I was anything but disposed to be placed on the hospital list.

Being passed forward to the others, Vanquisher was summoned, and the Squire noticing him limp, said, "What is the matter with that hound? He's lame."

"He has cut his near fore-foot a little," replied Will.

"Let me see," rejoined our master, and upon lifting it up, said, "He has sprung a claw, and *you* ought to have known it."

The huntsman's face became a little flushed, and he looked as if he felt the rebuke keenly.

There was no further remark of censure after this, and when the entire presentation had been gone through with, the Squire took his departure, expressing himself perfectly

satisfied and content with the general arrangements of the establishment.

"I'm not going out to-morrow," said I to Trimbush, with my spirits down to zero.

"Never mind," replied my friend; adding, by way of consolation, that he would give me a good account of the day's sport.

"Yes," rejoined I, "but that's a poor makeshift for the disappointment of not joining in it."

"Well, well!" added he, hastily. "We can't have everything as we could wish, and must make the best of crooked matters when they occur. I dare say," continued Trimbush, "that the blow you received the other day, with the fright, may have put you out of sorts."

"Probably," said I, "and I wish the fellow——"

"Pish, pish!" interrupted my companion. "You might as well wish him good as wish him evil. We have no more power in the one case than in the other, and it's old womanish to snap your teeth when you can't bite."

"I heard a man say, when we were out last," said I, resolved to take advantage of Trimbush's present loquacious humour; for

the old hound spent most of his time in a sort of dreaming, winking, blinking state in the kennel, and was excessively out of temper if disturbed, "I heard a man say when we were out last," repeated I, "that he liked to see a flying hound, and would hang every line-hunter that was ever bred."

"He must have known a great deal about fox-hunting," replied Trimbush, with a sarcastic grin, "a very great deal indeed. I should like to have his name and address."

"Of course he was wrong," observed I, with a slight touch of the interrogative in the remark.

"Wrong?" repeated Trimbush. "Ha, ha, ha! It makes my old sides ache again. What would the flying, flashy devils do when the scent fails at head if it was not for the line-hunters? By a line-hunter, I don't mean one of those old pottering fools who stick their noses to the ground as if they intended them to take root there; but a hound, that when he has stopped long enough to satisfy himself that he is on the line, holds forward, and occasionally feels for the scent. That is what I call a *killing* line-hunter, and is a guide and pilot for the pack. Often will you

see the flyers with their heads up and sterns down, and no more notion of stooping than a flock of stray pigeons, flash a field or two over the scent, and then back they turn and follow the line-hunter in his cast, and the moment he touches it, at him they dash, catch it up, and away they race again. But who gets all the praise?" continued the old hound, "Why, those who did none of the work."

"The Squire would give the applause to whom it was due, though," replied I.

"Yes, yes, yes," rejoined my companion, "and so would every true sportsman; but where there is one who understands fox-hunting as a *science*, there are five hundred who know no more about it than un-hatched tom tits. There are foxes and circumstances," continued he, "that will beat the best huntsman that ever cheered a hound or blew a horn; but in nine cases out of ten the cause lies in not paying attention to the line-hunters. Hang every line-hunter that was ever bred! Ha, ha, ha!" and the old hound's laugh of derision rung through the courts and lodging-houses far and wide.

"I am very glad you told me this,"

returned I; "for I began to think, from what I heard, there was nothing so likely to insure the praise of the field as having one's head in the air and flying like a bird."

"Nor is there," added Trimbush. "But who cares for the praise of a set of fools? I'd rather have one 'Yo—o' from our master, or a 'Hark to Trimbush, have at him, hark,' from Will Sykes, than all the yells and whoops from the greatest mob that ever met by a cover-side."

"That's true," said I. "There's no pleasure to be had from their cheer."

"Only last season," continued my friend, "some fellow who was dressed as if he knew better, absolutely cheered a second-season hound babbling the moment he was in cover. 'Softly, softly,' hallooed Will, cracking his whip. 'Why, it's a challenge,' said the gentleman in pink. 'Yes, sir,' replied Will, 'such a challenge that will cause him to have a hempen cord put round his throat to-morrow morning. We've put up with his noise long enough, and longer than the Squire would have done had I obeyed his orders strictly."

"And was he hung!" inquired I, feeling a cold shiver run through my veins.

"Yes," replied Trimbush. "He was led out of the court the next day, with a rope round his neck, to suffer for his repeated offence. It made us very sad to see him taken away; but no caution or punishment could break him of the habit, and his example was a shocking one for the young entry."

"I'll take great care not to acquire such an one," said I.

"Several made the same remark," replied Trimbush, "and some, who were rather prone to indulge in kicking up a row for nothing, made serious resolutions to avoid doing so for the future, when the fate of the babbler was witnessed."

"It was necessary, I suppose, for the discipline of the pack?" rejoined I.

"Ay," added the old hound, "if it were not for strict discipline we should be as ungovernable, wild, and useless as a lot of untamed tigers. Indeed," continued he, "I'm not certain that the tigers couldn't be turned to greater advantage."

CHAPTER IX.

"Cold grew the foggy morn: the day was brief:
Loose on the cherry hung the crimson leaf:
The dew dwelt ever on the herb, the woods
Roared with strong blasts, with mighty showers
the floods.
All green was varnished, save the pine and yew,
That still displayed their melancholy hue,
Save the green holly with its berries red,
And the green moss that o'er the gravel spread."

It was the last day of November, and, consequently, the concluding one of the first month of regular hunting, that I was left at home in consequence of indisposition. The huntsman had given me the night before a dose of something which tasted horribly bitter, and I tried to reject taking it; but, from my position between his knees, and his ramming a bullock's horn half down my throat, I was obliged to swallow the nauseous mixture against my will. Between the effects

of this, and the mortification of being deprived of the pleasure of a day's hunting, my spirits became sadly depressed, and I could do nothing but creep about the court whining, and feeling as miserable a dog as any on four feet.

The day was very windy, and the light clouds, looking like fleecy wool, scudded before the gale, charged with rain; but with the exception of a few drops which occasionally fell, there was nothing as yet but the threatening of the flooding storm.

Sighing, moaning, whistling, screaming—now in fitful gusts, then in one solid sweep, mighty nature's breath snaps the tree top and rends up the gnarled roots of a century's growth. On, on, he goes. Bough, branch, twig, and leaf—clinging like affection to the dead—he whirls and scatters in his stormy path, and with mad delight flings destruction in his wake. O-ho for the wind. Away, o'er heath and waste, and through dark and deep woods, and by lone churchyards, humming through ivy-twined belfries, and jarring rickety casements, shaking old hinges, and ripping up thatched eaves and roofs, he holds his course, like a fiery unchecked steed.

O-ho for the wind. Breasting the wave, he drives the surge high, and higher yet. Rolling mountains, topped with white and hissing foam, duck from cresting clouds to the wide chasms below. O-ho for the wind—death to others is fun to him. A ship! Boldly she braves his mighty thrust. Again. With one fell swoop, and, quivering, down to the depths she sinks. O-ho for the wind.

It was late in the day, and darkness began to drop around before there were any symptoms of my companions' return. At length I heard the welcome clink of the horses' feet along the gravel road leading to the kennel, and shortly afterwards old Mark threw open the door, and in they trotted.

"Well," said I, as Trimbush entered "what sport?"

"Oh!" replied he, "none at all. Such a wind as this," continued he, "is as bad as a blind fog or a hard frost; for the result is just the same. We can do nothing with a fox while it lasts."

"I didn't think of that," rejoined I, "or I should not have been so envious of ye all day."

"Might as well have been at home,"

returned the old hound, in a grumbling humour.

"You found?" said I.

"Of course we did," he replied. "We never get a blank day. They are too staunch and true preservers in *our* country for that to take place."

My companion was now called to take his turn in the warm bath, which Mark had prepared, and after his body and limbs were well laved, he was ordered into the lodging-room, where there was plenty of clean straw to roll in.

"There's nothing like this," said Trimbush, rubbing his back, with all his feet in the air. "There's nothing like this," repeated he, "after a cold, wretched day. It warms one's blood, prevents rheumatism, and is a real blessed preventative to many disorders. I like my bath as well as my meal."

"You are no bad judge," replied I, laughing.

"I should say not," returned he. "I should say that I was anything but a bad judge between what's good for us and what is not."

After all had been washed, and each had enjoyed a good tumble among the straw, Mark summoned them to the feeding-room, where a bountiful meal was ready for their sharpened appetites. When this was finished —and it did not occupy many minutes—they were conducted to another lodging-house, so that there might be no damp or chill remaining from the wet straw in the one used as the *drying* apartment. Nothing could be more perfect than all the arrangements made for our health and comfort, and yet, in themselves, they consisted of little more than a simple method of doing that well, which would have occupied quite as much time and trouble in the end to do badly.

"There," remarked Trimbush, with his ribs sticking out as if they were well lined within, "now I feel comfortable, and at peace with all the world."

"Except the foxes in it," replied I.

"Oh!" rejoined he, "I have no enmity towards them. It's the combined joy of finding, running, and beating them, and the pleasure of——"

"Eating them," added I.

"Well?" continued he, as if weighing the

sentence, "I suppose we may say that, too; but I am rather doubtful about it."

"About what?" inquired I.

"About the eating part of the business," replied he. "It's true that we break up a fox, and swallow him as if we loved his carcase better than any other kind of flesh. But, in my opinion, it is more from the excitement we are worked into than from any desirable flavour he possesses. A fox is too near ourselves for him to be considered proper food for our stomachs. It's approaching particularly close to dog eating dog."

"But that you did once," said I.

"Yes," responded Trimbush, carelessly, "I know I did, and might again, under similar circumstances. It only shows," he continued, "what we will do when in a rage or in an excited state. There is nothing with life, from an elephant to a cockroach, but we would have a shy at."

"Then you don't believe that we really love the varmint as a dainty morsel?" rejoined I.

"No," returned he, "I think not. Fancy, for instance, your killing and eating the poor little vixen chained just outside the kennel door."

"Ugh!" said I, disgusted at the thought.

"Does not that prove what I say?" asked my companion. "We pass her continually in going out and coming in, and yet not one of us ever thinks of making a meal of her. But if the fox was our *natural* food, we couldn't help doing so, and the first opportunity that presented itself she would be digested victuals."

"But, perhaps, the fear of getting a good drubbing may operate as a check to the inclinations of others," observed I.

"If that were the case," replied he, "how is it that the hounds, which occasionally come home by themselves hungry, never make the slightest attempt to injure her? Nothing would be easier than to kill and eat the fox without the smallest risk of being discovered."

"There's great force in your argument," I remarked.

"I flatter myself that there generally is," returned the egotistical old hound. "Now, look at a cat with a bird," he resumed, "the cases are very different. Whether the bird is wild or not—let it be on the tree or in a cage—she will be equally disposed to make it her

prey. Birds, like mice, are her natural food; and she, therefore, takes them without any other motive than to please her palate; but foxes, not being ours, we require the ardour of the chase to make them agreeable to *our* tastes."

"What do you think would be the effect if we were not allowed to break the fox up?" inquired I.

"That we should be just as eager to find, run and pull him down," replied he. "You hear sometimes of men talking about hounds wanting blood. It's all nonsense. We may want to *kill;* but hounds never flag from want of *blood*. All highly bred dogs like *us* love sport, and we hunt for the enjoyment of it; not for our bellies. But men are such selfish beasts, and think so much about eating that they can't give us credit for being more disinterested than themselves."

"You are very severe on our masters," rejoined I.

"Not more so than they deserve," returned Trimbush. "Not one in a thousand of 'em thinks for himself; but just repeats that which he's told, and so they go on babble, babble, babble, with about as much meaning

and sense as a flock of cackling geese. It's a strange thing, too," continued he, "that what they see in one case, forms no precedent or guide to their addlepated brains in another. I don't mean to compare pointers, or setters, or greyhounds with *us*, of course; but they never get blood, and yet they take as much pleasure in their work, and are as eager to find game, as if every bird shot over them was plucked, roasted, and served up in rich gravy, on silver, for their suppers. Now, it is quite clear that they don't hunt for blood, and, therefore, why should we? It is true that we look for it at the finish from habit, and because we are cheered even to take it, and I never feel wilder than when Tom and Ted are *who-whooping* over us; but, to say that we absolutely require *blood*, is all nonsense."

"But the more we kill, the greater kill-devils we become," said I.

"That's true," added my companion. "As in everything else, the supreme gratification lies in securing the object sought to be gained, and the running into our fox is ours. The same rule would apply to our killing but seldom, and consequently being generally

disappointed, as to pointers and setters having very few birds shot over them. Continued mortification would render all much less ardent for the work, in consequence of the dearth of the great *climax* to sport; not from the covetous, greedy, piggish, grovelling want of the material to lick our chops."

Finding Trimbush getting warm upon the subject, I thought it better not to provoke the discussion further, and made no reply. The old hound, however, continued to abuse mankind in general, for some minutes, for entertaining such a low estimate of our motives in the chase, and wound up his observations by saying, "It's not to be wondered at; for true sportsmen are born, like poets—chaps with as much music in their souls as we have in our tongues—now and then; but fools come into the world every second."

CHAPTER X.

"For with a sigh, a blast of all his breath,
That viewless thing, called life, did from him steal."

We were trotting leisurely to cover, one morning, when I remarked that Trimbush was more serious and silent than usual.

"What are you thinking about?" said I.

"We've got our work cut out to-day," replied he, "and I was just turning a few matters over in my brain, to untie some of the knots and difficulties which always beset us when we draw Berry brake."

"Is that our first draw?" said I.

"Yes," returned my companion, "and a sure find. For the last four seasons we have challenged the same fox, and, as he lives, I need not say that he has, hitherto, beaten us."

"But how?" I asked. "He must be

something extraordinary to beat ye four whole seasons.''

'' He is,'' added Trimbush : '' but he must be more than *that*, even to live till sun-down to-day.''

'' Tell me all about him,'' said I, '' and what your plans are; for I see your mind is made up for mischief.''

'' Why, in the first place, then, I should tell you,'' replied my friend, '' that Berry brake is the strongest cover I ever was in. It cuts our chests and sterns, and makes our heads swell terribly, to get through at any pace. The scent, too, is very good in it, and from having given Old Charley some good dusting, he will not hang a moment now. This, in so far as the strength of the cover is concerned, is all the better for us; but he is so wary that he bolts at the slightest noise, and has taken to his pads long before Tom has been even able to occupy his station at the upper part of the cover. Whatever his tactics may be, however, he invariably breaks away fresh, and with a good start, and being as strong a fox as ever stood before hounds, he has managed to outrun and beat us up to this time.''

'' Is he a big one? '' I inquired.

"I have viewed many a one in my day," replied Trimbush; "but never did I put eyes upon such a wolf-like looking animal. He's as black as thunder, and as long as a rope-walk. You can't mistake the devil's own, as Will Sykes christened him, if you chance to view him; but we have not done so for the last six times of hunting him."

"View or no view," rejoined I, "we'll stick to him."

"For a month, if we can but hunt, yard by yard, inch by inch," said the old hound, with fixed determination expressed in his proudly erected head and lashing stern.

"You've got some manœuvre or artful dodge in store for him, I know," I remarked.

"I have," responded my companion, "and you shall not only hear what it is, but shall join in the scheme. As I told you a short time since, most foxes hang in cover as long as they dare or can. It is their nature to screen themselves as much as possible, and they face the open only when compelled and pressed. A fox that has been often hunted, however, is of course more shy than one who has not, and the devil's own, having invariably met with a precious rattling when-

ever he attempted to thread the covers, never hangs fire now, but sweeps straight through them. In order to be on good terms with him, therefore, we must act in the same manner, and to lose no precious second of time, remember, that the moment we reach a cover, the chances are a hundred to one that he is already through. If not, we shall instantly know that the pull is in our favour by his hanging, for, if it was not for the general rule of foxes hanging in covers, they would serve us, in nineteen cases out of twenty, as the devil's own does, and run us clean out of all scent."

"Being so crafty," returned I, "I'm surprised that they don't depend more upon that which would save them, *their speed*."

"The reason is this," added Trimbush. "Although much faster than we are, and with power of equal endurance, they cannot bear the heat of the day as well as we can. It should be recollected also, that we have rested the night before, and commence our work with empty bellies in the morning; but the fox has been on the pad foraging for food when we were asleep, and, perhaps, is gorged at the moment we unkennel him. He, there-

fore, feels himself in no condition for racing, and tries all his cunning to elude us in preference to facing the open. I don't know," continued he, " how the devil's own regulates his meals; but I fancy he must sup early, and go to bed long before cock-crow."

At this moment Will Sykes glanced round, and hallooed, " Give them more room, Ned, and let them empty themselves."

"Ay, ay," replied Ned, checking his horse to leave greater space between himself and the huntsman.

" That's right," observed Trimbush. " There should always be plenty of room between the second whip and the huntsman, so that we may not be hurried when we want to stop."

" Then you intend," said I, resuming the subject, " then you intend——"

" To fly straight to the farthest end, or opposite side of every cover he points for," interrupted he, " and especially the moment we are thrown into Berry brake, in order to be on good terms with him at the burst. It's our only chance," continued the old hound, " and if he beats us to-day, with the ground in the order that it is, and this mild velvety

wind, hang me if I shall have any hope of breaking up the devil's own."

"Have you made known your plan to any of the others?" I inquired.

"Yes," replied my companion, "two couple and a half of the right sort stand in with us, and it will go hard but we'll give a better account of him than he has met with yet."

We had not to travel far to the meet, and soon after Trimbush ceased speaking we came in sight of it. The Squire had just trotted up on his hack, and was dismounting at the moment of our arrival.

"Well!" said he, addressing Will Sykes, "is the devil's own to beat us again to-day?"

"He may, sir," replied the huntsman, giving a cursory glance at us, as if to direct his master's attention to the draft; "but if he does, I shall think Tom's suspicions are right."

"And what are they?" asked the Squire.

"That he bears a charmed life," replied Will, "and no hounds ever bred could run into him."

Our master laughed heartily at this, and

said, "We must try to break the charm."

I felt all on fire as the cover appeared, and could scarcely refrain from dashing after Tom when he trotted off to take his station. Trimbush, seeing my impatience, said, "Gently, my lad, gently. There's nothing like spirit; but wait for orders, and never yield to the impulse of committing a breach of discipline."

Notwithstanding this reasoning, however, I could see that he had enough to do to keep a check upon his own inclination to break away. But our impatience was not kept long upon the stretch. Will was as anxious to begin as we were, and no sooner had the whips taken their places than he threw us into cover, but without the slightest noise being made. There was not so much even as the crack of a thong.

"That's right," said Trimbush, going like a bullet through the furze, "although I should not wonder but he's gone."

The hounds, instructed by Trimbush, and agreeing to adopt his proceedings, were Dashwood, Hector, Loyalty, Wildboy, and Rubicon, all old friends of his. We went together in a body full swing, more as if we were flying to a view halloo than drawing a

cover, and just when about the thick of it, a whimper from Chancellor announced that the devil's own was afoot.

"Tally-ho!" now rung from Tom Holt's throat.

"Shoot to the right," said Trimbush, leading, and in a few strides we were outside the thick, almost impenetrable gorse.

"Tally-ho, tally-ho!" again hallooed Tom.

"Come along," said the old hound, "we are close to his brush this time at any rate."

Racing to where the whipper-in stood with his cap in the air, we picked up the scent and found it sweeter than fresh-pulled flowers.

Settling to him, and with a bunch of our companions, who likewise made play to the halloo as we did, away we rattled at the pace which only a burning scent and hounds bristling for a kill can show.

For an hour-and-a-half we burst him along, and not one fox in a thousand could have stood before us for such a time and over such a country, in which there was not so much as a spinny to hide him; but he kept on at just the same rate, and a halloo, every now and then, told us that he was only just a-head. Several of us were tailed off, and some never

reached the main body at all. The burst was so quick, that the field, too, couldn't get well away with us, and the consequence was that nearly all the horses were run to a standstill before getting their second wind.

"I begin to think," said Trimbush, still the leader of the chosen few, "that his point's Gretwith rock, and if so, there's not a bush to hold him for fifteen miles as straight as the crow flies."

"He can't last the distance," replied Rubicon. "We shall run him from scent to view in less than another mile."

"So I think," rejoined Wildboy. "His red rag's hanging from his jaws worse than mine, I know, and that feels like dried chalk."

"We shall come to soil presently," returned Loyalty. "There's the Loam stream not far a-head."

"Egad!" added Dashwood, "but I wish it was in my next stride. I'm blistered with thirst."

"I shouldn't be surprised," said Trimbush, "to find him try an artful move at the Loam. Be careful, my hearts, and don't flash forward on the opposite bank. Feel for

it as you go, and make good inch by inch, rather than be in doubt. We shall save time by the trouble.''

Thus schooled, we took especial care, upon refreshing ourselves in the Loam, to follow the instructions given, and our first cast was along the verge down stream, which, also, chanced to be down wind.

'' This is his line,'' said Trimbush, evidently puzzled, '' and yet——''

'' Let us try up wind,'' interrupted Dashwood, '' he may have headed, as he's a sinking one.''

'' You flatter yourself,'' returned the old hound; '' he has as much life in him as will serve to test your pluck and powers for an hour to come.''

'' But he may have headed back,'' observed Wildboy.

'' He *may*,'' quietly added Trimbush; '' but make your work good as ye go. I think,'' continued he, '' that we have cast to the right, which was the probable line, far enough. Now let us try the left.''

Will Sykes, Ned Adams, and the Squire, now came in sight; but their horses could not be spurred out of a trot. Their heads were

between their knees, and their tails shook as if they must drop off.

"How beautifully they work," I heard the Squire say as he threw himself from the saddle. "Let them alone; pray let them alone."

We had now made the cast as far to the left as we had done to the right, and yet we could not hit him off.

"I'm sure he's headed back," said Wildboy, confidently.

"We'll try," replied Trimbush; "but I doubt it."

"It's now quite clear," said the Squire, as we failed to touch the scent in our track, "that the hounds can make nothing of it. They have had a fair trial; now let me see what you can do, William."

Will threw his strong, keen eye forward, and his ears were pricked for any halloo or indication of the line of the fox; but nothing appeared to enlighten him. He then out with his horn, and was about making a wider and more forward cast than we had made down wind, when Trimbush sprang into the stream, and swam to a small patch of sedge and grass, not a great deal bigger than a man's hat, and

apparently scarcely large enough to hold a rat, when bang the fox sprang from the middle and away he raced, whisking the water from his brush like a maid trundling her mop. We rushed at him in a body, but might as well have attempted to get to the head of a stroke of soaped lightning.

"A trick worthy of the devil's own," said Trimbush, laughing, "but I proved a match for him this time."

"How was it that we could not carry the scent down stream?" inquired I, as the devil's own became lost to view over the brow of a short but steep hill.

"Because," replied my companion, "he reached the water some seconds before ourselves, and swimming so far *down the stream*, he gained the little bank of mud, where he squatted, with all the scent *washed away from him*. We could, therefore, carry it no further than where he took water, and as he did not break from it, the reason is obvious for our being unable to act otherwise than we did."

"I can't think how you came to suspect that he had laid up there," remarked I.

"I never knew a fox to do so before,"

returned the old hound. "Soil is about the only dodge a stag has to try his cunning at; but a fox rarely hangs in or about water. I, however," continued he, "was prepared for any trick with the devil's own, and my anticipation of a deep one proved correct."

We now came to a more enclosed country, and the fences greatly added to our momentarily increasing distress. The hounds dropped off one by one, and some, attempting to jump the steep and wide ditches, fell into them, and there laid, not having strength enough to crawl out again.

It was fearful work, and how I managed to stagger forward is a mystery to me to this day. Trimbush did his best to cheer us on, and continually reminded us "that a kill was certain if we only stuck to him a *little longer*." But this "little longer" appeared to be a very indefinite period.

The winter day was waning fast. Objects at a short distance began to loom through the thickening shades, and the sun's last rays had scarcely left a faint tinge of his glory in the west. Still the chase went on. There was no check, let, or stop. On, on, we flew: the pursuing and pursued.

"He dies, by the Lord!" cried Trimbush, in perfect ecstacy, as we flashed a few yards over the scent, and then, turning, hit it off short to the right. "He dies, he dies!" cried he, throwing up his head, and waking a loud echo from his deep-toned tongue.

"What do you mean?" inquired I, reeling with weakness, and certain that my remaining strength was all but spent.

"His point was Gretwith rock, as I thought long since," replied the old hound; "but he can't live the distance. He has now turned short to run up wind, which proves him to be a sinking one, and if he reaches Quaffam wood it is as much as he can do."

Seeing that Trimbush was serious, this sage opinion lent fresh aid to our flagging energies, and the skeleton of his force, comprising only Dashwood, Wildboy, and myself, answered his cheer by redoubling our efforts to run into the devil's own.

The wood which Trimbush spoke of now appeared at the bottom of a deep valley, and into the underbush we dashed, confident that the fox must hang, and also in the hope that he would not live to leave it. I had no sooner, however, entered the cover than, losing the

cool refreshing wind at my nostrils, I fell to the ground, faint and breathless; but every effort proved fruitless; and crouching behind the trunk of a large tree, I was obliged to remain stationary sorely against my will.

For a few minutes I heard my companions driving the devil's own to the furthest end of the cover from where I laid, and then, as their cry approached, I knew they had headed him towards me. Putting my head close to the ground, I saw the fox creeping along with his back up, scarcely able to crawl. His tongue was drooping from his jaws, and his brush dragged along as if there was not strength enough in him even to lift that. Every now and then he stopped and turned his head, and, not perceiving me, continued to near the spot where I laid. Close and closer he came, and, at length, coming within springing distance, I made an effort which surprised myself, and fastened my teeth right across the middle of his loins before he had a chance of knowing from what quarter he was attacked. Catching me by the ear, however, he gave me a dying grip which made me remember the length of his teeth and the strength of his

jaws for some time to come, and he had not unlocked them, before Trimbush, Dashwood, and Loyalty came to my assistance, and quickly put an end to the struggle.

"We'll break him up presently," gasped Trimbush. "Let's get a sob or two of wind first," and forming a circle round the lifeless carcase of the devil's own, we lay stretched upon the ground, panting and beaten to a crawl.

At this moment something crashing through the brushwood was heard, and soon afterwards a labouring man came running up, and seizing the fox, lifted him above his head, and "who-whooped" most lustily. He then drew a great clasped knife from a sheath, and cut off the head, brush, and pads of the devil's own.

"Ah!" said he, "I heard ye, and thought there was something up more than common. I can guess all about it. You've beaten every one o' the field, and tailed off all the rest o' the pack."

"You're right enough, old fellow," observed Trimbush, "and I wish you could understand me as well as I can you. But what the deuce are ye about with the fox?"

The astonishment of Trimbush was caused by seeing the man deliberately proceeding to skin the fox, as he might the body of a dead cat or rabbit.

"I'll soon whip off your jacket," said the man, "and then they can eat ye nice and comfortably. Such a skin as this," continued he, "must be terribly tough, I know."

"What a considerate Christian!" exclaimed Loyalty. "Old Mark could scarcely be more thoughtful."

"Besides," resumed the labourer, finishing his job, "such a skin as this is worth half-a-crown, and it had much better go into my pocket than down your bellies."

"Ho, ho!" ejaculated Trimbush. "That's the secret of your attention, is it?"

"Who-whoop!" hallooed the man. "Who-whoop!" and throwing the dismembered carcase to us, we tore it into pieces and demolished, with more than ordinary relish, the devil's own.

"Now, what am I to do with ye?" observed the rustic, scratching the back part of his head.

"Take us to the nearest best quarters," said Trimbush; "give us a good supper,

plenty of straw, and lead us home in the morning."

"It's a long distance," soliloquized the man; "but I shall get well paid for my trouble, I know. It can't be done to-night, howsomever; and so I'll get farmer Oatfield to give grub and lodgings, and journey home with ye to-morrow myself."

"A capital move," said Trimbush, "and a sentiment after my own heart. Come along."

Most willingly we followed our conductor from the cover, and after proceeding about a mile, we came to one of those nests of comforts, a good farm-house. As we entered the yard, two rough and shaggy shepherd's dogs ran barking towards us; but upon coming closer, they wagged their short stumpy tails by way of a welcome, and soon afterwards we had a famous supper of warm milk and meal, supplied to us by the hospitable Mr. Oatfield, who heard with infinite glee the rustic's account of the way in which he discovered us; and then, by his orders, some bundles of fresh straw were shaken out, upon which we stretched ourselves, with that pleasure which only the wearied feel.

CHAPTER XI.

"The gorse is yellow on the heath,
The banks with speed-well flowers are gay,
The oaks are budding, and beneath
The hawthorn soon will bear the wreath,
The silver wreath of May."

"I HATE to see those violets a-peeping on the banks," said old Mark to the huntsman, one morning, "and always did."

"Why so?" asked Will.

"Because they are a sure sign that hunting is drawing to a close," replied our feeder.

"Yes, yes," rejoined Will Sykes. "True enough. When the speed-well flowers begin to show," continued he, "we may be certain that the season's almost at an end."

"Shall we kill a May fox?" inquired

Mark, for he always coupled the *we* in all relating to us and our doings.

"No," replied Will. "The season's too forward, and the Squire said yesterday he would only hunt twice more."

"That's bad news," observed Trimbush. "However," said he, "the noses on the kennel-door show that we have given a good account of our foxes."

"The devil's own is not there," replied I. "How is that?"

"No," rejoined the old hound. "His head was sent to be mounted as a cup, I heard Tom tell Ned Adams, and it is always to be placed in the middle of the table at the hunt-dinner."

"I'm glad of that," returned I.

"No doubt you are," added Trimbush, "and so am I. It will be a lasting record of a run that, if equalled, was never beaten."

"What was the time, do you suppose?" inquired I.

"Not a minute less than five hours," responded my companion.

"How proud the Squire and all of them were upon our return!" said I.

"Yes," rejoined the old hound. "I

thought we should be killed by that which seldom forms the ground of coroners' inquests —excessive kindness."

"Well!" exclaimed I, "since we have but two days remaining, we must endeavour to wind up the season with a good finish."

"To be sure," returned Trimbush; "a brace more of noses must be added to the account, at least."

"How tired I shall be of kennel life throughout the long, hot summer," said I, with a whine at the thought.

"It is rather monotonous, I must say," replied my companion.

"And then to be continually shut up," rejoined I.

"Oh! but you'll not be," added he. "We are taken out always at daybreak, when the air and ground are nice and cool, and have a gentle trot for some eight or ten miles. Then a certain number, from three to four couple, are allowed, in turns, to remain at large all day about the kennel, or where we like, so long as we don't get into mischief."

"That's very kind and considerate," said I, "and contributes greatly to our happiness."

"And health, you might have added," continued Trimbush. "Nothing is so bad as close confinement for us, and, indeed, for all kinds of sporting dogs. The more liberty we have, the better for our condition, spirit, and general good. Trencher-fed hounds," said he, "are remarkable for the superiority they possess over their kennelled brethren, and the only cause is from the freedom they enjoy."

"What a pity it is," said I, "that we can't make our rulers comprehend us as well as we understand them."

"Their heads are so thick," replied Trimbush, contemptuously. "A great many are solid, like stones, all the way through, I'm sure."

"Some act as if they were," rejoined I.

"Act?" sneered the old hound. "Upon my soul I can't think what nineteen out of twenty were born for. Certainly not for fox-hunting; that's quite evident."

"It's a good thing," I remarked, "that our master is not one of the stone-heads."

"Yes," returned he, "we are fortunate in that respect, and in most others. Will and Mark are as famous hound servants as ever entered a kennel, and, as a good huntsman

makes good hounds, so does a good master make good servants.''

'' There's a wonderful deal in the management,'' I observed.

'' Everything,'' replied Trimbush. ''And, unless a master of foxhounds is a thorough-going sportsman, and is acquainted with all the apparently trifling details of his establishment, you may depend upon it that he's very much out of his place.''

'' Your information concerning our liberty during the summer months,'' said I, '' has reconciled me somewhat to the mortification of closing the season.''

'' We need not examine farther,'' resumed Trimbush, '' than the effect produced upon birds, when caged, to learn the advantages of freedom. The plumage of a wild bird is close, smooth, and bright; while that of one in close confinement is dull and rough. There is strength and energy in the one, too, which is never seen in the other.''

'' The feather often shows which way the wind blows,'' remarked I.

''As well as the national banner of England floating in the breeze,'' returned the old hound.

"I have heard," I remarked, after a pause,, "with the greatest pleasure, all that you have said regarding us, and I do not think anything has been advanced without sufficient reason being given. But what would you say may be deemed a general rule for a huntsman to observe?'

"In the field?" asked Trimbush.

"Yes," replied I.

"Study the wind," returned he, "let hounds alone, and keep his eyes on the line-hunters. On these important points," he continued, "depends all the success in hunting. But when I say let hounds alone, I mean that they are to stand still just long enough for them to be sure that the scent is not at the point they are trying. We then go cheerfully to try another; but there is nothing so prejudicial as an imperfect, hasty cast."

"Nothing can be more obvious," I replied; "and I wish, with all my heart, that such a golden rule could be indelibly carved in the memory of every one whom fate may decree to blow a horn to hounds."

"Ay," rejoined Trimbush, "if abided by, there would be but little cause for grumbling about want of sport. We can generally do

far better without assistance than with it, and the more we receive, the more helpless and artificial we become. I believe I told ye so a short time since, and it is the case, not only with us, but with everybody, two-footed and four, to look for support from those resources, which, through times of difficulties, save labour and exertion, rather than put our own shoulders to the collar. This is but natural, and the blame rests more with those who are unwise enough to forget that we all have our duty to perform, and in doing that of others they commit as great an error as in neglecting their own; because, if not idle themselves, they are the positive cause of neglect and idleness in their fellows."

"Upon my honour," returned I, "you talk like a philosopher."

"Then a philosopher speaks but the simple truth," added my companion, "in very simple language."

"You never hear," said I, diving again more particularly into our subject, "of men admitting that they had anything to do with losing a fox, although they invariably claim a large share in the honour of killing him."

"You have noticed that, have you?"

responded the old hound, laughing. "No; it is always *they* lost him, but *we* killed him. Ha, ha, ha!"

"It ought to be just reversed," rejoined I.

"There would be much greater truth in the assertion, when generally applied," returned Trimbush. "A fox is frequently lost through them, and rare, indeed, is the occurrence when any act on their part may be regarded as one of assistance in killing him."

"I begin to have a great contempt for the ignorance of human beings," observed I.

"All of us do at the end of our first season," replied my friend. "We discover, by that time, what a set of know-nothings men are, and, if worthy to be retained in the pack, take no notice whatever of their cheers or rates; but merely avoid their horses' feet, and get away from them as far and as fast as we can."

CHAPTER XII.

"When early primroses appear,
And vales are decked with daffodils,
I hail the new reviving year,
And soothing hope my bosom fills.
The lambkin bleating on the plain,
The swallow seen with gladdened eye,
The welcome cuckoo's merry strain,
Proclaim the joyful summer nigh."

It was the second week in April, and the last day of the season, that we jogged slowly along the road to the meet. The season had been unusually forward, and the air was fragrant with the early violets and primroses, decking the roadside banks. There was a haze rolling along the valleys, and the boughs and branches of the trees, now unfolding their luxuriant and freshest green, were glittering with myriads of dew-drops, flashing in the light of the young spring morn.

Punctuality being the standing order with

our Squire, Will often consulted his watch to regulate our pace, so that we should be at the fixture exactly at the time named; and as we approached Duvale village, the church clock was striking the hour of ten. Turning on to a patch of green, where a few geese and a lonely dejected-looking donkey cropped the meagre herbage, and a host of round-faced chubby children played, and madly screamed with joy to see us arrive, we formed a group around Will's horse in eager expectation of the Squire's coming. The hum of the last stroke had scarcely ceased, when the sharp pit-a-pat of a horse's feet was heard, and immediately afterwards the Squire came cantering up, accompanied by three or four of his friends.

I was glad to see that the field comprised those only who hunted regularly with us, and, although many of them were generally too anxious to get forward, and thought of little more than showing well in the first flight, yet there was no fear of much unsportsman-like conduct on their part.

Without the loss of a minute we trotted off to our first draw, a long and narrow belt of fir trees, with thick brushwood at the bottom,

which proved a blank. We then drew a line of small spinnies, and in one of them, at the furthest end up wind, I saw two or three old hounds flourish their sterns at one spot, and before I could reach it, a first-seasoned one, like myself, called Boaster, threw his tongue.

"Gently, Boaster," hallooed Will, giving an admonitory crack of the whip. "Gently, Boaster."

Upon pushing my nose among the group, I inhaled a slight scent of *the* animal; but it was very faint.

"It's a stale drag,' said Trimbush, "and he may be twenty miles away by this time. Who opened on it?" asked he.

"Boaster," replied I, fearing that he might think me guilty of the puppy-like deed.

"Then I tell you this, youngster," rejoined the old hound, "if you're so free with your tongue, you'll have reason to wish, some day, that it had been cut out at your birth."

"But it was the right scent," expostulated Boaster; "and how could I tell if it was stale or not?"

"Then your nose is not worth a damn," returned Trimbush, passionately. "At any

rate," continued he, "you might have a little decent modesty, and not take precedency of *us*."

Trimbush placed a very strong emphasis upon the "us," and Boaster, ashamed and abashed, drooped his stern, and, for the remainder of the day, did not again attempt playing first fiddle.

We were now taken about two miles, and thrown into a large rambling cover, composed of patches of gorse, bramble, and nutwood.

"I saw some fresh billets just now, sir," said Ned Adams to the Squire.

"Where?"

"Just under that ash, and on the edge of the gap, sir," replied the second whip.

"Very well," rejoined his master.

I was close to Dashwood and Trimbush, when both stopped suddenly, and simultaneously throwing up their heads, both gave long bell-like notes, which rung and echoed far and near.

"Hark to Trimbush!" cried Will Sykes; "hark to Dashwood, hark, hark!" and then, as I and others picked up the grateful scent, and threw our tongues cheerfully, he hallooed, "Hark together, hark!"

Now we closed; now we went full swing. Up went Tom Holt's cap.

"It's a vixen, sir," I heard him say.

"Stop them, then," replied our master, "and let her go. We can't spare a bitch fox now."

Out we crashed; but Tom charged at our heads, cracking his awful double thong, and being well mounted, the most daring of us knew that it was hopeless to endeavour to get away with her. Boaster was the only one who made a lame attempt, and he instantly got a cut across the loins, which sent him flying back into cover howling most piteously.

"It's a hard case," said Trimbush, doggedly, "to be whipped off in this fashion, and I don't think it's fair. When too late to kill vixens," continued he, with little apparent inclination to draw the cover again, "why not give up hunting altogether?"

"You would be the last to carry out that principle, I'm sure," observed Rubicon.

"I don't know that," rejoined the old hound. "It's very tantalizing and dispiriting to be stopped the moment a fox, which we have taken the trouble and pains to find,

breaks away. We meet with enough disappointments which can't be avoided, throughout a season, without having such as these thrust upon us.''

'' But we are continually so stopped in cub-hunting,'' returned Rubicon.

'' That's quite a different matter,'' said Trimbush. '' There are then two or three brace of 'em afoot, perhaps, and they get headed back as well as ourselves. We can always reckon, too, upon plenty of sport at that time; but at the end of a season, when foxes are thin, it——''

At this moment I winded the glorious scent again, and, throwing my tongue, bang a great dark-coloured fox went across a ride. Trimbush cut short his harangue, and, forgetting the cause of his anger, flew to my side, and away we rattled.

'' Have at him! '' hallooed Will. '' Have at him, darlings! Yoiks, have at him! ''

Up went Tom Holt's cap again.

''All right, sir,'' I heard him say. ''As fine a dog-fox as ever was seen.''

Through the furze we dashed, and out burst more than two-thirds of us close to his brush.

Twang, twang, twang, twang, went Will's horn.

"For'ard, for'ard!" hallooed Ned Adams: "get to him hounds, get to him! For'ard! for'*ard!*"

For fifteen minutes we flew along at our best pace, over a country, without even a bush strong enough to hold him. The scent being breast high, we cut out some of the sharpest work for the best and boldest to ride to us.

"His point's the main earth at the Curby brake," said Trimbush; "but old 'fox-fix' has been there with his spade and pickaxe, I'll be bound."

The cover spoken of by my companion was quickly gained, and on the slope of a steep bank, thickly twined with the stubborn roots of some neighbouring oaks, we ran straight to the mouth of a closed earth.

"Ha, ha!" laughed Trimbush, "I said so. If he had poked his nose underground here, they might have dug for a week to no purpose."

We now carried it through the brake, and, sinking some rising ground, entered Bushford Woodlands. Here the small enclosures and thick fences began to tell both upon us and the

field, and instead of carrying a head in one close and compact body, many began to tail and string in the rear. As near as I can guess we had ran ten miles from the find without the check of a moment, when we threw up at a gate leading into a road. We flew over it, and saw an old woman with a red cloak on, screaming most lustily; but whether from fright or joy I could not discover.

To the left we went, but not making it out, turned short to the right, when Will blowing a "come-to-me," off we swept to the summons.

"I saw it, sir," I heard the woman shriek; "I saw it, sir, as plain as the nose on your face, jump over the gate and then jump back again. And it's put me all in such a twitter that——"

A *twang, twang,* from the horn, drowned the conclusion of the old woman's delivery, and, trying back, we were quickly on his line again, and making play at topping speed.

"I thought," observed Trimbush, "that the old woman had headed him; but it doesn't do for us to try back until we have made our casts good, right and left. It is quite correct for a huntsman to do so if he learns from any

cause that the fox has been headed; but we should not speculate upon chances or accidents."

We now carried it over some deep fallows, and, being very dry and flying, we had to pick through with great care. It was remarkable to see the difference between the old steady hounds and the young and eager ones in these difficulties. With their noses on the ground, the pilots of the pack felt for the scent, here and there and held it forward with patience and perseverance, while the too ardent and flashy ones dashed in all directions, with as much notion of the line of the fox, as that of the rook flying over their heads. After picking through the ploughs we were enabled to up with our heads again, cluster, and go full swing over some small grass fields to a village road, where unfortunately, some dung had been recently carted, and the horrid smell made me feel ready to vomit. Trimbush felt along the road a considerable distance, as it was down wind, before he was satisfied that this was not his line, and then turning up, made about as wide a cast, but to no purpose.

'I wonder," said the old hound, both vexed

and puzzled, " if he has been headed back? "

Rubicon, who must have had a remarkably strong stomach, now jumped upon the steaming, reeking, stinking heap, and, plunging his nose under a loose portion at the top, drew out the fox by a hind leg. In an instant we flew to his assistance, and for the first and last time in my life, I helped to kill a fox on a dung heap.

" Well! " said our master, wiping his bald head, and looking as pleased as at any period that I ever saw him, " we wind up the season with a glorious finish. We were too far behind to see," he continued; " but of course they must have viewed him into the manure."

" No doubt, sir," replied Will, " or he would most likely have beaten us."

" It only shows," rejoined the Squire, " to what improbable shifts a sinking fox will have resort. How often men's brains are racked to discover the why and wherefore that a fox *could* have beaten their judgment and experience, when, perhaps, he may be close to their elbows without the smallest blame to be attached to either hounds or them for his escape."

" Or merit to his craft and cunning, you

might have added," said Trimbush. "For when a fox sinks, not only his physical strength is expended, but his mental powers die with it. He is in such a mortal fright, that he cannot think; but like a blown chicken, pokes his head into the first hiding place which presents itself."

As we were trotting quietly homewards, as proud as peacocks, I saw Trimbush tip Rubicon over the nose with his stern, and drew him from the body on one side of the road.

"Be candid," said he, in a half whisper. "How was it that you made the fox out in that beastly manure?"

"I winded him," rejoined Rubicon, with a sly grin.

"Pshaw!" replied the old hound. "It was impossible."

"Well, well!" interrupted Rubicon, "I admit it. The fact is I jumped on the heap for a very different purpose, and as I did so, I felt something move under my feet. A thought struck me——"

"As it did me," interrupted Trimbush, "before commencing your explanation. We owe the kill to chance."

CHAPTER XIII.

"Now the hill, the hedge, are green,
Now the warbler's throat's in tune,
Blithsome is the verdant scene,
Brightened by the beams of noon."

It was a sultry summer's day, and Trimbush and myself were luxuriating under the wide-spreading and deep shade of a walnut tree growing near the kennel. Five or six of our companions, on the free list, like ourselves, were lounging about in the coolest spots, and their only occasional signs of life, as they laid upon the ground, consisted in brushing the buzzing flies from their nostrils and hides, and, now and then, making a snap at their enemies. Wearied, at length, with my own laziness, I made an effort to draw

Trimbush into conversation, by asking him the cause of kennel lameness.

The old hound rolled on his side, and giving a wide yawn, stretched out his legs as far as possible, with his stern stiffly turned over his back.

"That's comfortable," said he, "very. And so you wish to learn the cause of one of the greatest afflictions that can visit us?"

"Yes," rejoined I, "it is my wish to know everything concerning our interests. For if mankind be the proper study for man, so must hounds and hunting be the proper study for me."

"A sensible remark," returned my companion; "and as you are always ready to listen, there can be no doubt but that you'll attain proficiency."

"I'm greatly obliged for your encouragement," added I.

"I remember two seasons ago," said Trimbush, "hearing Tom Holt read aloud from *The Sporting Magazine* a remarkably sensible article on the subject you wish to be informed about, and it made so deep an impression that I can now repeat it nearly word for word."

"I'm all attention," I replied.

My friend cleared his throat, and then commenced.

"Peculiar conditions of the atmosphere have generally the effect of some disorders, which attack men and animals to so great an extent as to be denominated the prevailing diseases of the time—such as cholera, typhus fever, influenza, and many others. These results are not always contemporary with the weather, which in reality produces them. Indeed, they most frequently make their appearance some little time after a change of temperature has taken place, by which certain influences have been established, which become the sources of disorder in the functions of animal economy. Such disorders as those which are peculiar to any particular districts cannot fail to receive an impulse from such a season as the one we have lately experienced. Kennel lameness ranks among the number as likely to be one over which these powers may be expected to have a very considerable control. Much has been said and much has been written on the subject, and many possibilities have been suggested, and remedies proposed, which have so little reason for their basis, that it appears extraordinary

how they could ever have entered the brain of reasonable and thinking men: but before going into a detail, I will introduce a few remarks on endemic diseases, for the purpose of more clearly establishing the point, 'that certain situations produce the complaint, and will for ever be the cause of its continuance so long as those situations are preserved'; and also that certain modes of treatment are the causes of its prevailing in some instances with a greater degree of inveteracy. Indeed I have no hesitation in declaring, that bad management will, even on healthy sites, produce a modified degree of rheumatism, which assumes the name of kennel lameness.

"There are certain diseases which afflict the human body, and which are found to rage in particular localities, termed endemic. They are attributable to some pecularities of the soil, the air, the food, and in some instances of the habits of the inhabitants. Poverty, want of cleanliness, and, the consequence of poverty, bad and insufficient food and raiment, may be enumerated among the most conspicuous causes. A removal of them will naturally be followed by the disappearance of the endemic. So with hounds: if a

slight degree of rheumatism exists, produced by irregular treatment, alter the treatment, and if those already affected do not recover, the list of invalids will not be augmented by its appearance in fresh subjects. Some may oppose me on this point, by observing, if bad management produces the complaint in a slight degree, may it not do so in a greater? To this I answer distinctly, No; inasmuch as in some kennels the disorder has never been known to emanate, but that unsound hounds brought from other kennels have recovered: besides which, there are many kennels in which the disorder rages where the hounds are treated precisely upon the same system as in establishments which are perfectly free from it.

"It is well known to what an extent various diseases, such as cutaneous complaints and scurvy, have identified themselves with peculiar situations, more especially after certain seasons. Medical practitioners are of opinion, that, for the thoroughly comprehending the nature and the cure of endemical diseases, an accurate study of topography is essentially necessary. The inhabitants of countries or places where diseases prevail

endemically are very often exempted from other serious indispositions; and the natives of a country or district frequently become inured by habit to influences which at once manifest their power over newly-imported strangers, especially in tropical regions. In countries inhabited by different races of men, the same circumstances do not always produce the same effects upon different varieties. The water of the Seine produces disorder in the Londoner, to which the Parisian, who is accustomed to it, is exempt. The treatment also of similar diseases often requires to be very different in consequence of the locality where it appears, and also the constitution and habits of the patient.

"The miasmata, or particles which emanate from the surface of the earth, produce marked effects upon the human constitution in those places where they prevail. The districts where they are most conspicuous are the marshes, fens and swamps in Lincolnshire, Cambridgeshire, and Essex: intermitting fevers and agues are the consequence. Although marshy districts are pre-eminently capable of engendering miasmata, they are not exclusively so: the re-

sult of numerous observations proves that the circumstances essential to this phenomenon are the presence of water, or moisture, and the influence of solar heat : when the quantity of water is great at any particular time, the effects do not manifest themselves until it subsides. Many circumstances are supposed to influence the development of the effects of these exhalations. It is also asserted, that it has sometimes been carried to considerable distances, to situations naturally healthy, by currents of air. This is a consideration of vast importance in forming an opinion upon the fact of kennel lameness being indigenous to certain situations, and shows most clearly how little benefit can be anticipated in those cases where the malady is severe, by the interposition of impervious concretes, asphaltum, and such like preparations.

" It has been asserted that attacks of paralysis have been mistaken for kennel lameness. How such mistakes can have originated with any persons conversant with the characteristics of the latter malady, it is difficult to conceive, unless that term is intended to comprehend all disorders in which lameness is apparent. If so, ere long, we

shall have hounds, when lamed by thorns or bruises, included in the list. Kennel lameness, properly so termed, is intended to convey the idea of a malady whose distinctive symptoms are so identically similar to rheumatism, that there appears scarcely any visible reason why it should be distinguished by any other term; but as it has now acquired a standing in the huntsman's nomenclature, it would be presumption to attempt to displace it: nevertheless, the term rheumatism would be quite as applicable and more universally comprehended. Before a physiologist pronounces to what class a disorder belongs, and before a physician attempts to prescribe a remedy for its cure, it is requisite to investigate the symptoms which exist. Now the symptoms of paralysis and rheumatism are so distinctly at variance, that it is utterly impossible to fall under a mistake. Paralysis is a nervous affection, in which the nerves, acting on the muscles, interrupt their motion, relaxing their tone and fibre, and very frequently distorting some particular limb. Rheumatism is a rigid or contracted state of the muscles, attended with a slight inflammatory condition of the tissue which

covers the muscles, having the effect, when the animal has been some time at rest, of creating a certain degree of adhesion. Thus a hound badly affected with kennel lameness, on first being taken out, is so stiff and sore as scarcely to be able to move—a state in which I have seen so many, that the remembrance is accompanied with feelings of commiseration and pity that would prompt me to any trouble or exertion that would produce the effect of subduing the complaint. When hounds thus disordered have been in motion a short time, so as to increase the circulation of the blood, the extreme rigidity or stiffness goes off to a certain extent, dependent upon the violence of the attack. But paralytic affections would not be attended with any such results: exercise would rather tend to increase than to improve the capabilities of action.

"I have very little doubt but the severe work which staghounds occasionally undergo, and the numerous changes of temperature which they have to contend against, are causes for the aggravation of this malady. A foxhound generally has some preparatory exercise, besides the exertion of going to

covert, which latter is equivalent to the staghound going to the place of meeting. The former has to draw for and to find his fox, in which effort his powers are more gradually brought into play, and the circulation of his blood is more rationally increased; but the staghound is laid on to the scent of his game without any preparatory excitement of the system, when he immediately goes to work, straining every nerve in his ardour for the chase, and very frequently maintains those efforts during the period of several hours; and frequently, when in an evident state of exhaustion, a time when immersion is dangerous, he plunges into rivers, canals, or lakes—places which stags have such inordinate propensities for when severely pressed.

"The high and stimulating food, which is no doubt found necessary to maintain condition during a long chase, is another cause for symptoms of kennel lameness making their appearance with staghounds. The circumstance of the canine species not throwing off perspirable matter through the pores of the skin, appears to be a very powerful reason why they are so susceptible of rheumatic affections, and more especially that

it should assume a chronic character when once introduced into the system. It is asserted that the dog perspires through the tongue; admitting that as a fact, it is to a very trifling extent, and not equivalent to the vast effusion of violent perspiration which must ensue from the laborious exertions of the chase, providing a hound generates an equivalent proportion according to his bulk that either a man or a horse does under similar efforts; besides which, making its escape from one part only, the general relief to the animal cannot be equivalent to that which is experienced by those animals who have outlets in the immediate proximity of almost every muscle. It is very evident that a great portion of the extraneous fluid, which in some animals flies off in perspiration, is by the hound voided in urine. The vast quantity which he passes is a proof of this, and it is a reason why medicines acting upon the urinary functions should be resorted to, in cases of kennel lameness, as a palliative.

"Seeing the announcement some months ago that 'our right trusty and well-beloved friend' and faithful correspondent, RINGWOOD, had forwarded his opinions and

suggestions on the subject of Kennel Lameness, and appreciating most highly his experience on sporting subjects, I was buoyed up with the hope that his discoveries would have thrown some new light on the case; but was much disappointed at reading his recommendations to try the effect of fires in the lodging-rooms. Knowing them to have been tried by Sir B. Graham, Mr. Boycott, also in the kennels occupied by Mr. Nicol, I believe also by Lord Kintore, with prejudicial consequences, it only remains to intimate that the practice is incompatible. Moreover, the diuretic tendency which it produces, in encouraging hounds to perform their evacuations in the lodging-rooms, instead of in the yards, is a reason why the adoption of fires, however secured, in kennels, cannot be carried out consistently with the usual discipline and necessary observance of cleanliness. One of the most positive cases in proof, that on some occasions kennel lameness proceeds entirely from the unhealthy situation of their habitation, is that of Mr. Foljambe. With the utmost attention to kennel management, a long series of years passed with nothing but disappointment and vexation to crown the

most liberal and judicious experiments. Nothing that human skill could suggest or accomplish was left untried, until at length it was determined to remove the hounds to a kennel at another part of the country, where, under precisely the same management, they are sound and well.

" In conversation with a friend a short time since, a M. F. H., he made the remark, that if I could make the discovery of a cure for this disorder, I should be entitled to honors and distinctions too superfluous to mention. My reply was simply this: 'A remedy has been discovered, not by myself, for I desire no merit which I am not entitled to, but it is clearly proved that removal to a healthy site will effect all that is desired.' The removal must not, however, be undertaken without mature consideration, in order to ascertain if the proposed new situation is perfectly free from the causes which produce the disorder. Clay soils may be denominated the most eligible; light sandy soils and light soils on chalk, are the worst. Any attempt to cure the complaint on a situation which so evidently engenders it, is like trying to heal a wound while the substance which created it

remains within. Removal on the first discovery that the kennel is so located as to be injurious will most assuredly be found the most satisfactory, and, in the end, the most economical determination."

I managed to keep myself from a most seductive doze during my companions somewhat prosy delivery; but scarcely had he finished, than I was in the land of dreams, and toying with

> "The children of an idle brain,
> Begot of nothing but vain fantasy."

CHAPTER XIV.

"We still have slept together,
Rose at an instant, learn'd, play'd, eat together;
And wheresoe'er we went, like Juno's swans,
Still we went coupled, and inseparable."

It was late in August, and the weather so sultry, that we scarcely knew how to bear with the intense heat. Some did nothing but lap the water, always running in a clear fine stream, from the fountain in the court, and assuaged their thirst by continual sipping. Others drank deeply, but seldom; and all, more or less, evinced the feverish suffering they endured.

I was lying in a shady corner of the court one day about noontide, when I happened to notice a hound of the name of Gameboy go two or three times towards the fountain, and then turn from it with a slight shudder.

Rising from the ground, I went towards him and said, "What's the matter?"

"I don't know," replied he, "but I feel very strange. I'm dreadfully thirsty, and yet cannot go near the water."

I now perceived that his eyes looked dull and leaden, and his body shook, as if every nerve and sinew were shattered and unstrung.

"Perhaps you have eaten something that has disagreed with you," returned I.

"No," added he; "I picked up a bone in our walk this morning, but that couldn't injure me."

"What's that wound on your shoulder," I asked.

"A mere scratch," said he, "I got from a cur three days ago. He flew at me while passing a cottage garden, and just touched me on the skin."

This intelligence struck me with the most inexpressible uneasiness, and I went to Trimbush, who was asleep, and waking him, repeated all I had seen and heard.

In a moment the old hound jumped from his posture of indolence, and approaching Gameboy, regarded him minutely.

"Are you unwell?" said he.

"Yes," replied Gameboy; "I never felt so queer before."

"Are you thirsty?"

"Awfully so," he rejoined, "and yet cannot drink."

"But why?" asked Trimbush.

Gameboy gave an involuntary shudder, and said, "The sight, and even the noise of water, is more painful than I can describe."

"Let me see you make an effort to go near it," responded my companion. "Perseverance may overcome this, seemingly, nervous affection."

In accordance with the desire, poor Gameboy turned his head towards the fountain, and endeavoured to approach it; but had scarcely taken a stride in the direction, when a spasm appeared to seize him, and with a howl he rushed cowering to the farthest corner of the court.

The attention of the rest of the hounds was attracted by this, and several were trotting towards him to learn the cause, when Trimbush interposed by saying, "Stay—*he's mad*."

As if each had received a shock of electricity, the whole stood still and mute,

regarding in silent horror their miserable companion. It is impossible to convey the effect produced upon the communication made thus briefly by Trimbush. Every one seemed not to know what to do or say, until Gameboy, with a white thick foam dropping from his jaw, sprung upon his feet and rushed towards them. A wild bull would not have scattered us more completely. Frenzied with fear, we flew from the maddened wretch, who rushed staggering at everything in his way, and snapping his jaws with that fury which the mad can only show.

"Get from him," said Trimbush, in a thick husky voice, and exhibiting the greatest terror. "Pray get from him. It's death if he touches ye."

The noise in the kennel now became furious. All were stricken with fright, and the howling and cries were most appalling.

It could scarcely have continued more than a minute, however, when the stentorian voices of Will Sykes and Ned Adams were heard, calling for "quiet," accompanied by the cracks of a heavy thong.

"Thanks be to the saints!" exclaimed Trimbush, "assistance is at hand."

Immediately afterwards both entered the court, and the huntsman glancing round, said reproachfully, " What's all this about, eh? "

At this juncture, Mark the feeder made his appearance, and his eye instantly fell upon Gameboy. I never shall forget the old man's countenance, the moment he saw the hound. A ghastly paleness came over it, and he looked almost stunned with the sight.

" Great heaven! " ejaculated he, holding up both his hands. " Great heaven, Will, there's madness among 'em! "

" What! " said the huntsman, his question sounding like a sharp expression of pain.

" Madness," repeated Mark, " as sure as we live."

With staring eyes, the huntsman and second whip examined Gameboy at a short distance and, after a slight pause, the former exclaimed, " 'Tis true! Run, Ned, and bring the Sqiure."

" Get in, get in," hallooed Mark, and closing the lodging-room door, we were safe from the attacks of the wretched Gameboy, who was now left alone in the court.

" Take care," said Will, retreating towards the door, " he's in a most rabid state."

"I wonder where it will end," returned Mark, joining the huntsman's side by the door.

"Who can tell?" rejoined Will, bitterly. "We may lose half of 'em, perhaps."

"I noticed that he looked rather heavy about the eyes, for a day or two," added the feeder, "but I accounted for it through the heat."

"It was only yesterday," said Will, "that I gave him a dose of black brimstone and lard, seeing that he was feverish."

"It was a mercy no accident occurred to ye," responded Mark. "A mere scratch from a tooth would have——"

"What's this?" interrupted a well-known voice, and there stood our master, breathless and exhausted with the speed he had used in attending the summons to the fearful scene.

"Gameboy, sir," replied Will, pointing to the convulsive and agonized hound, "is mad beyond a doubt."

"Are there any more with such symptoms?" hurriedly asked the squire, scrutinizing the object of their painful attention and interest.

"We have not had time for a careful examination, sir," returned the huntsman;

"but I saw none as we hastily separated them."

"You have acted well," said the Squire, "and we must continue the same prompt and sound judgment. Shoot that hound instantly."

No sooner was the order given than Mark produced a long, single-barrelled flint gun, with which he was in the habit of slaughtering rats about the precincts of the kennel, and handed it to Will.

"Do it for me," whispered he, with a quivering lip. "I feel quite sick."

Our feeder hesitated for a second or two; but after a short struggle with a corresponding reluctance to become the executioner, he brought the piece to his shoulder, and drove the charge crashing through Gameboy's brain. Without a perceptible throe of anguish, poor Gameboy fell lifeless upon the flags, and so ended, to us, this terrible tragedy.

"Before endeavouring to learn the cause of the disease in him," said the Squire, "draft each hound singly, and let us see whether any have been bitten by him, or if the least cause of fear exists that more must be destroyed."

"I hope not, sir," returned Will, with a

strangely inarticulate voice. "What shall we do if——"

"It's useless to talk of what we *shall* do," interrupted his master irritably, "until we learn what we *can* do. Draft the hounds."

One by one was called from the lodging-room by name, and after minutely examining the eyes, nose and mouth, every hackle was rubbed back to see if the slightest recent abrasion of the skin had been made. At length it came to my turn, and unfortunately a scratch made by myself, while brushing a flea from my neck in the morning, was found just under my left ear.

"Reload your gun," said the Squire.

A trembling seized me at these words, so that I could scarcely stand, and a film spread itself across my eyes, which nearly blinded me.

"Oh, sir," exclaimed Will Sykes, "don't have him shot yet. It does not look to me like a bite."

"But it does to me," replied his master. "What think you, Mark?"

The old man divided the hackles with his thumb and finger, and after a careful examination pronounced an opinion coinciding with that of the huntsman.

"I know that the hound is a great favourite with both of ye," said the Squire, "and with good reasons. But remember, if from any false feeling of kindness we spare one infected, the entire pack may be lost."

"I wouldn't do it, sir," returned Mark. "I wouldn't do it, sir," repeated he, "if he was my own child, and I thought him bitten. The intended kindness would be right down cruelty."

"Still," added our master, shaking his head, "I entertain great doubt as to the policy of hesitating to take the safer course. However, let him be shut up by himself and watched incessantly; and in the event of the most trifling but certain symptom appearing, wait for no instructions from me, but shoot him."

I was now taken from the court and subjected to solitary confinement for six weeks; but as Tom Holt explained the cause of poor Gameboy's malady, from having seen him attacked by the cur, and all the rest being found free from the smallest likelihood of inoculation, I was permitted to join my companions again soon after cub-hunting commenced. During my involuntary retreat,

Mark paid me the greatest attention, and, that I might not be low-spirited for want of company, would often sit upon my bench and chat to me, and croon snatches of old ballads to himself. He took me long walks, too, when his work was done, and altogether the time was spent much more agreeably than might be imagined in the gloom of solitude.

Hearty was the welcome upon my re-appearance in the court, and each of my friends expressed his warm delight at seeing me again; although a stranger to our ways and customs might deem the reception somewhat churlish, and of the growling mood. However, we do not 'use our tongues for the concealment of our thoughts,' and if devoid of the polish of refined manners, we at least possess an equal proportion of their honesty.

CHAPTER XV.

" Slow pass'd the night, and now with silver ray,
The star of morning ushers in the day;
The shadows fly before the roseate hours,
And the chill dew hangs glittering on the flowers;
The pruning-hook or humble spade to wield,
The cheerful labourer hastens to the field."

" TRIFLES, light as air," observed Trimbush, " are frequently of the most momentous importance. Who could have thought, now," continued he, " that brushing a flea from your neck would have subjected ye to upwards of six weeks confinement from all society? "

"Ah! " exclaimed I, " if I could have had any anticipation of such a result, he might have sucked my blood till now."

"I was in a terrible fright," rejoined my friend, "that they were going to stop its circulation at once."

"It would have been one of the most unjustifiable murders ever committed," returned I.

"That may be all very true," added my companion; "but what compensation would the act of injustice have been to you?"

"None," replied I.

"There have been innumerable such-like mistakes committed," said Trimbush, "and never discovered. Fortunately for you, the suspected had the benefit of the doubt."

"I consider that the Squire was far too hasty in his decision regarding myself," responded I.

"The convicted always think so," rejoined the old hound. "However," continued he, "I quite agree in the same opinion. There was sufficient cause for fearful apprehension, and it was impossible to calculate the amount of the calamity. But I do not think that any kind of fear should be allowed to exaggerate an injury. To observe sedulous care in preventing its extension is most wise and prudent. At the same time, if a hasty panic

overrules the cooler judgment, the engendered evil may on evil's head accumulate ten-fold. Our master was decidedly wrong in contemplating having you destroyed with such slight evidence of questionable inoculation; but he was quite right in ordering you to be drafted from the rest. The one was an unweighed, ill-judged impulse—the other, a wise precaution."

"A distinction, with a material difference," I observed.

"Yes," replied he, "beyond the shadow of a doubt. I once heard," resumed my friend, "of a M. F. H. having his entire pack destroyed, in consequence of a couple-and-a-half showing symptoms of hydrophobia—or, as we should say, in more intelligible language, a dread of water. Nothing could be more wanton or unjustifiable, and as well might an entire community of human beings be doomed to perish in consequence of one or more of its members becoming insane, as fifty or sixty couple of hounds, from the same cause."

"Were there any other doubtful cases besides myself?" I inquired.

"No," replied Trimbush. "All were

turned over with the greatest scrutiny; but nothing suspicious appearing, we were allowed to remain as we were, with a great additional watch being kept over us. In fact, Mark, or Will Sykes, was always close by for a long time after Gameboy's death; and if a hound growled even in his dream, one or the other was at hand in a moment. I never saw greater vigilance; and I can't help thinking that the two kept an eye open for weeks in their sleep."

The tramp of three horses approaching the kennel door put an end to this, our first conversation since the fatal occurrence of Gameboy's death.

"Let 'em out, Mark," said a well-known voice, and as the feeder threw back the door, we scrambled from the court, and ran and jumped in sportive circles about the horses. Although in the highest state of excitement, every tongue was mute, and a slight crack from Tom Holt's whip put a considerable check to the rather violent gambols of a few of the youngest. It was not quite daylight as we trotted along betwen three and four miles; and as we entered a gate at the end of a by-lane, who should be standing with his

reins over his arm, and leaning carelessly against the side of his horse, but our "up-with-the-lark" and excellent master.

"You are behind your time, William," said he, throwing himself into his saddle.

"Begging your pardon, sir," replied the huntsman, tugging at the curb chain securing his thick watch in a very deep fob, "I think not."

"By seven minutes," rejoined his master.

"Quite right, sir," added Will, looking at his apoplectic time-keeper. "Seven minutes have given me the slip."

"No matter," returned the Squire; "we have scarcely light enough as it is."

The narrow zig-zag lane led on to a large open grass field, on the borders of which was one of the best and strongest covers in our country.

"Who has examined this cover?" asked the Squire.

"Tom Holt, sir," replied the huntsman.

"Where did you find most billets?"

"In the field beyond this, sir," replied the whipper-in, with a touch of his cap.

"Very good," rejoined his master. "Then take them there, William," continued he,

" and let the puppies see the old hounds feel for the scent."

No sooner were we in the field spoken of by Tom Holt, than, stooping my nose to the ground, I inhaled that scent, which, from the first, sent my blood tingling through my whole body. Several began to hustle, push, and fling themselves about, and one, named Harbinger, threw his tongue.

" So-oftly, Harbinger, so-oftly," said Will. " You're as noisy as ever, I see."

" He's incorrigible," replied the Squire. " Put him away."

" We shall cure him after a few more trials, sir, I hope," rejoined the huntsman, who could never bear to have one of us destroyed.

" He should have been cured before this," rejoined his master, " and if not removed, he will render others as bad as himself. I hate a noisy hound," continued he, " and I'm certain no drilling will stop Harbinger from riot and babbling. There is no vice so contagious and injurious as the one he possesses and persists in; and to use further forbearance in retaining him in the pack would be most unwise. You know, last season, that

after being flogged three times in one day for riot at hare, he repeated the fault whenever he had the chance and thought the whips could not get at him."

"He's to go, then, sir?" said Will.

"The sooner the better," replied the Squire. "I wish to have my hounds so perfect, that if any one of them speaks in cover, you may be certain that it's a fox, and know that he may be cheered without fear of a mistake. Unless this be the case, what pleasure can there be to me, as their master, or satisfaction to you, as their huntsman?"

Will gave no answer, and to account for the obstinate Harbinger's fate, all I can say is, that he was led from the kennel the following day, with a coil of rope round his neck.

We now carried the drag into the cover, and Trimbush and myself acknowledged the scent. Will gave us a cheer that startled many a pigeon from her roost, and Tom Holt and Ned Adams spurred right and left, with orders to head short back every fox that made his appearance. We got up to our cub, and drove him through the cover at a slashing rate. The morning being warm, and the scent good, there was no breathing time, and

the pace soon began to tell upon the family of foxes, which we were now racing in divided lots.

"How many of them are there?" inquired the Squire.

"Not less than two brace and a half, sir," replied the huntsman.

"Very good," rejoined his master. "Let the vixen go if she will."

He then galloped towards Tom Holt, and just as he was about cracking his whip, a signal from the Squire stopped him.

"Come from this corner," said he, "and let the old one go, and as soon as these hounds come out with the scent, stop them, and take them to William."

Scarcely were the instructions given, when the vixen took advantage of the opportunity, and broke away at her best pace. The lot settled to her were stopped, and taken to the huntsman at the top of a ride, in about the middle of the cover.

Being joined in one body, we now pressed our cub most severely; and I viewed him cross two or three rides with his red rag out, in a truly sinking condition.

"This cub is very much distressed, sir,"

observed the huntsman, "and if they don't get one of the others up, for they have all dropped but this, they'll soon run into him."

I now heard a succession of cracks from a thong, which I knew to be Ned Adams's.

"He's headed a fox back," said Trimbush, exultingly, "but it isn't our hunted one. He's out—come along."

A bunch of us swept from the side of the cover, and with heads up, dashed across a field, before Will was aware that we had got away.

"They're out, by heaven!" exclaimed the huntsman. "Where can Ned be?"

"All right," returned the Squire. "They broke from the side, and no one's to blame."

We carried the scent through the first hedge into a summerland, and threw up. Will, coming up, took hold of us rather hastily, and cast us down wind.

"Gently, William, gently," said his master, reprovingly. "You appear to have forgotten the golden rule of letting them alone."

We felt down wind for some distance, but not making it out, turned up, and as we were passing the spot where we had jumped

through the hedge, a thought struck me that the cub might be skulking in the ditch on the other side. Popping my nose down, I dropped into it, and finding instantly that I was right, I rushed through the brambles, and just as he was about to spring out, I caught him across a tender part, and with one pinch he was as dead as a salt herring.

"Who-whoop!" hallooed the Squire. "Who-whoop, my beauty!"

To the envy of most of my companions, I received great praise for this kill from our master, who seemed not to know how to make enough of me on our road home.

"Yo-o, Ringwood!" cried he, throwing me a bit of biscuit from his pocket. "Yo-o, Ringwood, darling," and then turning to Will, said, "What a mercy such a hound as that was not destroyed through my haste!"

"Ay, sir," returned the huntsman, with a knowing shake of the head. "If we have as good, we've none better."

"Thanks to my instructions," growled Trimbush.

"Come, come," said I, "don't be jealous of the little praise I'm getting. You receive your share."

"Jealous?" repeated my companion, with a proud lash of his stern, "I flatter myself that I can afford to be *generous*."

Seeing, however, that he was a little annoyed at the attention I received, I said nothing more, but jogged in silence by the side of the Squire's horse.

"By the way," said our master, addressing Will, "in speaking of haste, let this morning be another lesson to you not to take your hounds off their noses with a sinking fox. More are lost by that than by any other mistake committed. There was every probability of your leaving your fox behind in the ditch, and then you would have said that he had headed back to cover. A fresh one would have been got up, and the error remained undiscovered. Countless foxes, booked safe to die, are changed in this manner, and escape from no other reason than from taking hounds off their noses. Remember this, William."

The huntsman touched his cap, and the conversation dropped.

CHAPTER XVI.

"For aught I see they are as sick that
Surfeit with too much, as they that starve with
Nothing."

We had just finished our breakfast one morning, and were lying about the court to assist digestion, when I chanced to remark that I considered the flesh not quite so nicely cooked as usual.

"Your palate must be out of order," returned Trimbush. "Mark is as good a boiler as ever heated a copper."

"Still the material might have been tough," said I, "and consequently required longer boiling."

"I think not," rejoined my friend, with a

smack of his lips. "My taste may be depended upon in such important matters."

"A great deal of one's comfort depends upon the cook," I observed.

"Beyond conception," emphatically replied the old hound. "In addition to which," he continued, "we can't perform our duties unless properly kept. The meal must be good and old, the flesh well but not over-boiled, and the broth rich and sweet to enable us to kill foxes handsomely. Our strength, speed, and wind, depend upon the feeding."

"No doubt about it," coincided I.

"I remember," resumed my friend, "hearing a scientific opinion given on this important subject to us from a thorough-going sportsman of the name of Cecil. In a few words I think more was never spoken."

"If not too much trouble," said I, "it would gratify me to hear it repeated."

"A pleased and patient listener," returned Trimbush, "invariably renders me a willing speaker." And after settling himself in a position of the greatest ease, he commenced the following philosophical dissertation on catering for foxhounds:

"It is a circumstance very universally remarked by masters of hounds, huntsmen, and others who are in the habit of making observations in the field, that hounds have appeared sooner blown when running on moist days during this season than usual. The cause has evidently arisen from the peculiar mildness of the weather. Whenever the atmosphere is damp and warm, it contains a less quantity of oxygen than when it is dry, clear, and bracing, and the effect on the respiratory organs of all animals when brought into active exertion is very apparent. Hounds have been observed to lap water when going to covert more freely on some occasions than others, which is also a symptom of the effect of the atmosphere.

"Liebig's very clever work may be consulted to advantage, to ascertain how and why certain causes and effects in the animal economy are produced; but as many persons who may be interested on the subject have not an opportunity of procuring it, I will introduce a few abbreviated extracts, which are most particularly connected with the effects of food and the peculiar conditions of the atmosphere.

"Liebig says, 'Two animals, which in equal times take up by means of the lungs and skin* unequal quantities of oxygen, consume quantities of the same nourishment which are unequal in the same ratio.

"'The consumption of oxygen in equal times may be expressed by the number of respirations: it is clear that in the same individual the quantity of nourishment required must vary with the force and number of the respirations.

"'A child, in whom the organs of respiration are naturally very active, requires food oftener than an adult, and bears hunger less easily. A bird deprived of food dies on the third day, while a serpent, with its sluggish respiration, can live without food three months or longer.

"'The number of respirations is less in a state of rest than during exercise or work. The quantity of food necessary in both conditions must vary in the same ratio.

* As hounds do not perspire through the skin, I apprehend they do not consume oxygen through that medium: hence a reason why the efforts of the lungs are so laborious when protracted exertions call them into increased action.

" ' The quantity of oxygen inspired is also affected by the temperature and density of the atmosphere.

" ' It is no difficult matter in warm climates to study moderation in eating, and men can bear hunger for a long time under the Equator, but cold and hunger united very soon exhaust the body.'

" Liebig also states, ' That the quantity of food is regulated by the number of respirations, by the temperature of the air, and by the amount of heat given off to the surrounding medium.'

" From the foregoing remarks, it will be seen how great an influence food has upon animals called upon to exert such violent labour as foxhounds are. The comparisons of the duration of life, when deprived of food, between the bird and the serpent, I apprehend, relates to birds whose nature it is to feed upon grain only, because the carnivorous birds live much longer without food, their respiration being slower: and I infer by this that the power of endurance in hounds, and their perfection of wind and condition, are regulated by feeding them with a due proportion of flesh, which, prepared by

being boiled, is converted at once into blood.

"All animals partaking of a mixed diet, partly of grain, will be greatly influenced in their respiratory organs by the proportions which are given to them and the state of the atmosphere. The quality of the blood being regulated by the quantity and the quality of food consumed, its capability of passing through the lungs is governed. When an animal has partaken largely of food which renders the blood of that character as to cause the consumption of a great quantity of oxygen in its passage through the lungs, and the atmosphere is deficient of that important gas —which is always the case in close damp weather, such as is occasionally experienced during the winter—it follows, as a matter of course, that hounds, and all such animals, will quickly evince symptoms of distress, or, familiarly speaking, will become blown, as the causes which produce that effect predominate.

" In hot climates man consumes very little, if any, animal food; in cold ones, scarcely anything else: and the Esquimaux will partake of blubber, animal oils, or fat—a food nauseating and disgusting to the people of another climate.

"With these facts it becomes apparent how the quantity and quality of food require to be regulated by circumstances, especially on the day before hunting.

"There are few, if any, masters of hounds or huntsmen who are not aware of the necessity of giving small proportions of flesh during the warm weather at the commencement of the season, and again in the spring, when such a condition of the atmosphere generally prevails as that which we so universally experience during the months of November, December, and January. Without a certain proportion of flesh, it is well known that hounds cannot work; that is to say, they cannot go through the fatigues of a quick burst or a protracted chase; at the same time, too large a quantity will render them gross and plethoric, consequently incapable of exertion.

"As the quality of the food depends in a very great degree upon the manner in which it is prepared, that becomes a subject worthy of considerable attention. It is a practice in many kennels to boil the flesh to a most unnecessary and prejudicial extent, but it is a custom which cannot be too strongly objected

to. Flesh over-boiled is divested of its nutritive properties in a very great degree. It may be remarked by some, those who are advocates for excessive boiling, that if the nutritive properties are extracted from the flesh, they are contained in the broth, and *that* broth being given to the hounds, the nutritious principles are still preserved—an argument which I can by no means agree to.

"Like man, the hound is found to thrive best upon food composed of flesh and grain combined, consequently a comparison between the two may with propriety be introduced. When a man undergoes the ordeal of training for an athletic engagement, the animal food which he partakes of is only subject to the process of cooking in a moderate degree; overdone meat is studiously avoided. To the valetudinarian broth is prescribed as affording light nourishment with a moderate expenditure of the powers of digestion, but is never called in aid to form a principal portion of the aliment for the human subject at a time when great exertion is required. It is always found that broth creates thirst with us, and there is no doubt it has the same effect on the hound when given to a great ex-

tent, more especially when made very strong.

"I must observe, that I am by no means about to recommend the disuse of broth in the kennel; but I wish to point out the propriety of giving it in moderate quantities, and of depending upon the flesh which is given for containing the bulk of nourishment, and giving it in that state when it contains the greatest quantity. It is an impression with some huntsmen, that by boiling the flesh to an excessive degree, the bad qualities are extracted—that is to say, if the horse had any disease about him, that the humours would be extracted from the flesh; but then it must be remembered that they would be contained in the broth, in which state they would be quite as injurious, or perhaps more so.

"At the time when an animal is performing great exertion, it is essentially requisite that his stomach should contain but a small quantity of food, but that food should be of a nutritious character and easy of digestion. The practice that I would recommend, and it is one borne out by the reasons already assigned, as well as by experiment, is, not to give hounds any broth at all in their food *on the day before* hunting.

"The pudding must be reduced with pure water which has been boiled, and the usual allowance, or perhaps, on some occasions, a trifling addition to the accustomed portion of flesh must of course be given; by this method of feeding, hounds will most assuredly do their work far better than when a quantity of broth with very little or no flesh is given; a custom adopted in some kennels with very bad results. From such treatment, hounds will be observed light of muscle, big in their bodies, and incapable of running up at the conclusion of a severe day. By adopting the recommendation of substituting water which has been boiled, for broth, on the day before hunting, it will be found that hounds will not evince an equal degree of thirst by constantly lapping on their road to cover, nor will they be so soon blown in chase."

"There," ejaculated Trimbush, upon the completion of his task, "that's what I call giving the 'why's' for all the 'wherefores.'"

Clever and philosophical as I deemed this delivery to be, I had become somewhat wearied with it, and in order to divert my companion from steeping his senses in forgetfulness, which his blinking eyelids bore

evidence was fast approaching, I asked him if he had ever turned his attention to the poetry as well as to the practical details of hunting.

"What do you mean?" inquired Trimbush, with a sleepy stare of surprise.

"Simply, whether you have made the attempt of earning for yourself that fame," replied I, "which I intend gaining for myself?"

"I'm quite in the dark," rejoined my companion, testily.

"Well, then," returned I, "to be more explicit, I mean to let my tongue appear *in print*."

"In print!" exclaimed Trimbush, husky with surprise. "How?"

"Ah," added I, quoting an early reply to one of my interrogatories, "there are many things as clear to our vision as the sunshine at noon, and yet their causes are hid in impenetrable darkness."

"Well, well!" added my friend, "I don't wish to appear inquisitive, but if you should mix me up in your—your—"

"Don't say book," remarked I. "It sounds so gent-like."

"Anything you please," said Trimbush. "But as I was about saying," continued he, "if you should come out so powerfully strong, perhaps you'd make room for a little slice of an attempt at a song upon our worthy master —God bless him!"

"Of your composing?" inquired I.

Trimbush coughed, licked his paws, examined the tip of his stern, as if a flea was taking a liberty in that quarter, but gave no answer.

I repeated the question.

"As you *will* have it," he rejoined, pettishly, "then it *is* my composition."

"I feel assured that you need not be ashamed of it," returned I. "Pray let me hear the effusion."

"You'll not laugh?" said he, inquiringly.

"Not if the intent be serious," I replied.

"In that case," rejoined Trimbush, "here goes!" and in a subdued, melodious voice, he commenced his original song of

THE OLD HUNTING SQUIRE.

I'll sing you a sporting song that was made by a sporting pate,
Of a fine old hunting Squire, who has a fine estate,
And who keeps his hounds and hunters at a liberal old rate,

And plenty gives to the poor and old who enter at
his gate;
Like a fine old hunting Squire, one of the present
day.

His custom is, when at the Meet, to welcome great
and small,
And a hearty greeting gives he to friends and
neighbours all;
'Tis here the laugh and joke and jest right merrily
go round,
"But hark, my boys! pray, cease your noise; for
now sly Reynard's found!"
Cries our fine old hunting Squire, one of the present
day.

Although threescore and ten his years, he boldly
takes the lead,
And flies the gate, the brook, and wall, and sweeps
along the mead;
He never swerves nor cranes—not he; his true
heart's in the sport.
Oh! our fine old hunting Squire is one of the right
sort!
A fine old hunting Squire, one of the present day.

From scent to view they run him now, in vain fleet
Reynard flies,
The ringing pack have doomed his death—he
struggles, but he dies!
And at the finish who was there? Why he who at
the burst
Led the boldest and the best, in the foremost flight
was first—
Our fine old hunting Squire, one of the present day.

"A beautiful chaunt!" ejaculated I, pleased with the sporting rhyme, "and one which shall have place in 'The Life of a Foxhound.'"

Having doubtlessly made every note of value which could be drawn from his experience, Ringwood's memoir here ends from want of material, and the earnest disposition on the part of his biographer of wishing to prove neither monotonous nor wearisome. It was deemed by that wise hound that a history or tale, when told, should, like a fox, when killed, be broken up and finished. To this, therefore, we will give an appropriate one in a ringing

WHO-WHOOP!

THE END.

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